TELOS

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Special Double Issue

THE FRENCH NEW RIGHT

NEW RIGHT - NEW LEFT - NEW PARADIGM?

PAUL PICCONE: Confronting the French New Right
FRANK ADLER: Left Vigilance in France
PIERRE-ANDRÉ TAGUIEFF: The Case of Alain de Benoist
MARK WEGIERSKI: The New Right in Europe
FRANCO SACCHI: The Italian New Right
ALAIN DE BENOIST: The Idea of Empire
PIERRE-ANDRÉ TAGUIEFF: The New Right on European Identity
PAUL GOTTFRIED: Alain de Benoist's Anti-Americanism
CHARLES CHAMPETIER: Press Campaign Against the New Right
NTERVIEW: PIERRE-ANDRÉ TAGUIEFF: Origins of the New Right
THREE INTERVIEWS WITH ALAIN DE BENOIST
AVIEZER TUCKER: The New Jews
SERGIO BENVENUTO: On Italy
DAMIAN TAMBINI: Two Interviews with Bossi and Rocchetta
NIKOLAJ-KLAUS V. KREITOR: Conservative Revolution in Sweden
AVIEZER TUCKER: The Former Praxis International in Prague
SERGIO BENVENUTO: Beyond Left and Right
NINO LANGIULLI: Radical Philosophy or New Class Ideology?

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Confronting the French New Right: Old Prejudices or a New Political Paradigm?

Paul Piccone

Fear of the New

To the extent that, as Hegel remarked, philosophy is its own time apprehended in thought, major historical events cannot be fully understood until well after they occur — after reflection has generated new, more adequate categories of analysis. Thus it is not surprising that the collapse of the Soviet system and the fading of the Cold War were initially misread as, e.g., "the end of history" (by naive liberal *apparatchiks*) or as the dawn of "authentic socialism" (by diehard Leftists, who saw contingent authoritarian encrustations as the only problem with an otherwise sound "really existing socialism"). These apologetic hermeneutical exercises are easy to understand: in both cases the objective is, first and foremost, to relegitimate internalized ideological assumptions by reducing the new to a mere extension of the old. The price one pays, however, is to miss what is really new. It is that same process Marx so vividly described at the beginning of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, whereby a present inevitably trapped in its immediacy can only deal with the future from the viewpoint of the past.

During the last few years, these premature self-serving accounts have been spectacularly refuted by events. The explosion of civil wars on almost every continent and the disintegration of practically all variations of socialism — both authoritarian, "really existing" versions as well as their more benevolent "welfare state" counterparts — have starkly demonstrated the need for radically different interpretations. New theoretical approaches may eventually help reconfigure the legacy of the

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past two centuries away from the still predominant but increasingly inadequate economistic models of both the Left and the liberals. Pending their elaboration, however, it may be useful to reconsider different sets of interpretive models which may have been unwarrantedly dismissed under Cold War pressures. Historically discarded not so much by persuasive arguments or rational analyses but by sheer force or moral self-righteousness, some of these alternatives (e.g., anarchist critiques brutally repressed by, among other things, official Comintern directives, or the plethora of right-wing theories summarily dumped after 1945 as part of the defeated fascist legacy) may help throw light on what has remained hidden in the background, but is now violently coming to the fore in incomprehensible guises. Within such a chaotic, transitional context, the kind of theoretical pluralism advocated by the likes of the late Paul K. Feyerabend and the Left Popperians[1] (whereby, no matter how wrong, alternative accounts function as the necessary preconditions for the development of more adequate ones), can only help sweep away ideological cobwebs and prefigure new theoretical paradigms able to at least temporarily break out of Hegel's historicist dilemma.

This is why it is puzzling to read the dark forebodings issued by forty members of the Parisian Left-liberal establishment concerning the threat of a "new fascism," calling for the exclusion from public discussion of ideas considered particularly repulsive, *before* they could be critically evaluated — a process itself rejected as "dangerous."[2] In a short statement providing no sustained arguments and identifying no clear targets, the "concerned" French intellectuals merely outline an "us" vs. "them" scenario recycling familiar WWII imagery: on the one side, the paladins of liberal-democratic values of "*liberté, egalité, fraternité*"; on the other, the forces of evil embodied in "anti-democratic" and "neo-Nazi" networks seeking to legitimate their sinister projects: exclusion, violence, crime. Another instance of the present desperately trying to understand a future which refuses to be reduced to a mere

1. See Paul K. Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: New Left Books, 1975); and *Science in a Free Society* (London: New Left Books, 1978). Long before the post-modernists, and with none of their nihilism and opportunism, Feyerabend and the Left Popperians developed the basis for a devastating critique of modernity in their critique of "the" scientific method. Similar ideas were also defended at various times by American naturalists and pragmatists.

2. Most of the documents pertaining to this incident are translated in this issue of *Telos*. For critical evaluations, see, Frank Adler, "Left Vigilance in France"; Pierre-André Taguieff, "Discussion or Inquisition? — The Case of Alain de Benoist"; and Charles Champetier, "The Summer of the Dinosaurs: Violent Press Campaign Against the New Right."

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extension of the past? As subsequent polemics have made clear, these Left vigilantes are merely indulging in well-tested McCarthyite practices to conduct inquisitions aimed at no one in particular and, therefore, potentially everyone, to create a climate of ideological intimidation for those even considering so-called "alternative discourses" or "unorthodox narratives." What is the "new fascism"? Does it refer to Zhirinovsky or Le Pen or Schönhuber or . . . ? The original "Appeal," published in *Le Monde* on July 13, 1993, does not say. In the polemics that followed, it became clear that the real target was not at all the obvious culprit, the far Right, but the New Right in general and Alain de Benoist in particular. In paradigmatic neo-Stalinist style, even card-carrying liberals with impeccable scholarly credentials such as Pierre-André Taguieff were publicly chastised for daring to take seriously and study and thereby legitimate the New Right as a relevant political entity.

Considering all the subsequent criticism, one would have thought that the whole incident had been an over-reaction by a few zealots who had succeeded in conning "respectable" intellectuals into signing the Appeal — an embarassing lapse into a French version of Political Correctness to be forgotten as soon as possible, in order to focus on more substantial matters the Appeal itself had identified as the root causes for the resurgence of "insidious perversions of thought" and threats to liberal democracies: "economic crisis, unemployment, social exclusion, and a general suspicion of the political world." Surprisingly enough, exactly a year latter the same group reissued practically the same "Appeal," this time signed by 1500 junior vigilantes presumably eager to confirm their own PC credentials. Has the French Left, or at least a substantial part of it, gone crazy? At a time when the bankruptcy of practically all the main political models urgently requires an intensified search for new alternatives and fresh approaches, it seems as if 1500 Left fundamentalists, oblivious to the shameful Stalinist legacy, seek to cut off theoretical debates and exclude from public discussion anyone deviating from predominant dogma by branding political opponents as "fascists," "neo-fascists" and "neo-Nazis" — terms with no fixed meanings beyond some residual demonizing power.

At any rate, notwithstanding its patently fraudulent character, the Appeal did succeed in at least temporarily marginalizing (or perpetuating the already existing marginalization of) the French New Right, in the same way forty years earlier Joseph McCarthy succeeded in silencing the American Left — notwithstanding his formal censure by the US Senate. Like the American Right, which in the 1960s was suddenly

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confronted with a resurgence of all those "dangerous ideas" — and more — the French Left vigilantes are dead wrong in assuming that their pious, neo-Stalinist "appeals" can substitute for rational dialogue and permanently repress "dangerous" ideas. This kind of efforts are usually the desperate last resort by exhausted ruling groups to legitimate increasingly untenable but still hegemonic political ideologies. For better or worse, the French New Right's "subversive" ideas are having considerable repercussions throughout Europe, at a time when the Left seems theoretically and politically finished, while the Right is experiencing an unexpected renaissance. These developments may signal a major paradigm shift threatening the displacement of traditional Left/Right divisions and a reconfiguration of post-Cold War politics. For these reasons, the New Right needs to be confronted head on rather than excluded by pretentious appeals *ex cathedra*. An intellectually honest Left cannot do otherwise.

Is the French New Right Either "New" or "Right"?

Fortunately, the American Left has not been in power as long as its French counterpart. Thus it is not as institutionally entrenched, and has not yet become as complacent, dogmatic and self-rightous. Notwithstanding its notorious PC police units — mostly mothballed in politically irrelevant academic ghettoes — at least some parts of it remain considerably more heterogeneous, open, and therefore able to confront "subversive" ideas on their own ground, without having to repress them with well-known "administrative measures." If the New Right is as sinister as the vigilantes claim, nothing more than open rational inquiry will help bury it in the Left's favorite cemetery: the dustbin of history.

Such an *Auseinandersetzung*, however, cannot be merely an abstract exercise in liberal tolerance but a serious effort to understand, learn and criticize what on close scrutiny turns out to be, on the whole, a rather interesting set of ideas. This may be explained by the fact that, as many serious analysts have already taken considerable pains to emphasize, a lot of them constitute (or used to constitute, before most of the academic US Left's postmodern involution into narcissistic identity politics) standard Left positions: participatory democracy, self-determination, local autonomy; opposition to capitalism, bureaucratic domination, nationalism, racism and traditional imperialism. Whereas the mainstream ex-Marxist Left no longer criticizes the "culture industry" as the manufacturer of alienated popular consciousness and, surprisingly enough, has developed the most articulate apologies for the cultural

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Kitsch it has euphemistically rebaptized as "popular culture," the French New Right has not only taken up the critique but, unlike the Frankfurt School's failure to prefigure viable alternatives and its subsequent escape into high culture and high modernism, has proposed concrete political strategies to combat it.

Once upon a time, before it tasted the narcotic of institutional power or the intellectual euthanasia of tenure, the mainstream Left used to criticize liberalism as capitalist ideology; capitalism as a system conducive to the destruction of personality, tradition and culture; and popular culture as a means of collective cretinization. It is now the New Right which indicts liberalism as bureaucratic domination over a populace reduced to a homogeneous mass of abstract individuals, capitalism as the nemesis of local self-determination and traditional cultures (the only ones still able to constitute autonomous individuality), and mass culture as the opiate of the masses. After the mystifications of Liberation Theology and multiculturalism, even Left anti-clericalism — that pre-WWII *sine qua non* of radical politics — has given way to an opportunistic religious tolerance. The French New Right, meanwhile, has developed a rigorous critique of Christianity (predicated, unfortunately, on a misreading of the history and doctrine of both Catholicism and Protestantism). As for anti-Americanism — another paradigmatic Left predilection — it now receives only lip-service from the Left, while it has become a major plank in the New Right platform. Similarly, the postmodern Left no longer has any principled critique of that traditional Right uncritically committed to nationalism, capitalism, imperialism, racism etc. (because it has, by and large, come to share many of its views). The New Right, however, has sharply broken with the National Front in France and the National Alliance in Italy precisely on these issues. As Taguieff has suggested, Benoist may very well be one of the few real New Leftists left![3]

What makes the French New Right particularly interesting is that it does not merely propose a bizarre reversal of positions but the end of the traditional contraposition of Left and Right in favor of a new political paradigm. According to its critique of liberalism and universalism, the meaning of the collapse of communism goes far beyond the disappearance of another abhorrent and oppressive political system, to the very core of the new structures of modern domination.

3. For the most extensive and balanced history of the French New Right, see Pierre-André Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite: Jelons d'une Analyse Critique* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 1994).

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What led the Soviet system first into Chapter 11 and subsequently into Chapter 7 was neither Reagan's military Keynesianism nor Stalin's crimes but its wasteful central planning, social engineering and abstract rationalism — characteristics which, in more moderate guises, also define all liberal-democratic regimes. Thus, far from being irreconcilable opposites, the bureaucratic centralism of the former Soviet Union and liberal technocracy in the West turn out to be variations of the same basic Enlightenment model — a model which, by defining all conflicts in economic terms, has successfully occluded a more pervasive logic of domination beyond labor/capital conflicts and predicated on the political power and obtaining between the rulers and the ruled, the experts and the masses, the administrators and the administered. During the last couple of centuries, blaming capitalism for every imaginable problem has been a convenient way to conceal the equally questionable role of the New Class of politicians, intellectuals and bureaucrats in institutionalizing and administering new structures of domination.

Various theories to account for the rise and role of this New Class were developed over the last century to explain and oppose precisely this relatively new logic of domination. These theories have a long history, going back not only to Alvin W. Gouldner or Milovan Djilas' famous text by that name, or Konrad's and Szelenyi's Hungarian version, or even those of James Burnham and Jan Waclaw Machajsky, but all the way back to the 19th century, to the anarchists' critique of Marx during the last tumultuous meetings of the First International, before it was sent away to die in New York.[4] Since these theories are very critical of the socio-political role of intellectuals as new agents of domination, and intellectuals are practically the only group writing about these matters, they are not very popular among those people they seek to discredit. Even Antonio Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectuals"

4. Reminiscent of Marx's ambivalence toward the bourgeoisie as the new ruling class and, along with the rest of his generation, deeply suspicious of any kind of populism, Gouldner sought to differentiate between an innovative and a regressive wing of the New Class. See his *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979). See also Djilas' classic work on communist intellectuals as a new class, *The New Class: An Aalysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957). For a bibliography concerning texts dealing with the New Class (unfortunately incomplete), see Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1993), pp. 509-529. For missing items, such as Rizzi and Machajsky, see Frank Adler, "Rizzi's Honor," in *Telos* 66 (Winter 1985-86), pp. 106-109; Alvin W. Gouldner, "Prologue to a Theory of Revolutionary Intellectuals," in *Telos* 26 (Winter 1975-76), pp. 3-36; and Ernest Haberkern, "Machajsky: A Rightfully Forgotten Prophet," in *Telos* 71 (Spring 1987), pp. 111-128.

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only deceptively overcomes the objection that intellectuals dominate as the agents of a pseudo-universalism concealing their claim to power. For Gramsci, their role remains that of mediators between a popular culture embodying living needs and modes of satisfaction (but frozen in archaic forms) and the objective truth properly articulated only by the party. The theory of cultural hegemony merely deals with how to successfully develop ways whereby this objective truth would spontaneously flow out of popular culture — an objective truth Gramsci was honest enough to recognize as ultimately another particularistic ideology in disguise, but one which he still upheld it on essentially pragmatic grounds.[5]

The main implication of all theories of the New Class is the displacement of *economic* conflicts between labor and capital as the *deus ex machina* of social dynamics, in favor of *political* conflicts between those possessing a "cultural capital" redeemable as social and political power and those with mere "cultural liabilities." In a context where all economic relations are mediated by political arrangements, this means that the struggle for power — including economic power as a special case — no longer defines politics in terms of a Left favoring egalitarian redistributive policies and a Right committed to defending existing privileges and social inequalities but in terms of control of institutions allocating a substantial segment of the collective social product appropriated through fiscal means. Thus the main new political division now obtains between centralizers committed to an extension of the state redistributive apparatus allegedly meant to solve all social problems

5. Not surprisingly, one of the many Left ideas the French New Right appropriated early on (in the mid-1970s) was Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony and civil society. Long before it was recycled as a prop for late liberal ideology by Habermasian apologists, Benoist saw the Gramscian concept of civil society as the terrain within which to win cultural hegemony for New Right ideas. Here the role of intellectuals is decisive in broad metapolitical strategy, but only as the catalysts in the long term project of overcoming liberalism and vindicating the cultural particularity of traditional communities. True to its critique of an equality presupposing a New Class to enforce it within the liberal state, the New Right projects the reintegration of intellectuals within particular cultural formations to eventually take on a role not all that different from that of Gramsci's "traditional intellectuals," i.e., the articulation, development and transmission of particularistic cultures from one generation to the next, independently of universalizing and therefore tendentially totalitarian pretenses. As such, New Right intellectuals not only avoid becoming New Class operatives but also function as true "organic intellectuals" in communities whose organic character prevents class differences from becoming decisive (as within early liberal-capitalism). For an extensive discussion of the French New Right appropriation of Gramsci, see Pierre-André Taguieff, *Vous Avez Dit Fascismes?* (Paris: Arthaud/Montalba, 1985), pp. 72-87.

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(hence "victimology" as the New Class' favorite mode of ideological self-legitimation) and populists committed to local autonomy, fiscal austerity and participatory forms of democracy.

Since the state presupposes the nation as its domain of operation, the new paradigm challenges the sanctity of the nation — the New Class' functional equivalent of the capitalist market — from the viewpoint of a federalism predicated on decentralization, local autonomy and cultural specificity. With the significant exception of the anarchists, since the dissolution of the Comintern and the end of WWII both the old Left and the traditional Right have generally assumed the nation as a given. From the viewpoint of theories of the New Class, it becomes a major tool of political domination. Much to the chagrin of the Old Right and of the huge centralized bureaucracies from Paris to Tokyo, the French New Right strongly advocates reconfiguring basic political units along federalist or confederalist lines (thus appropriating another venerable anarchist tradition). This realignment is meant to contain the universalizing power of the New Class and to vindicate those local traditional cultures being systematically homogenized by the culture industry.

The French New Right comes to its own version of the theory of New Class domination and ideology through its theory of racism, the critique of liberalism, and the violent rejection of abstract universalism. None of these positions have been, at one time or other, foreign to some sectors of the Left. Max Horkheimer's and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* — the Frankfurt School's *Bible*, if any particular book can be designated as such — has, as its main objective, the development of a theory of anti-Semitism and the vindication of that very same cultural particularity Benoist has been recycling as "*le droit à la différence*." Half a century after the drafting of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, however, even the French New Right's most careful critic has at various times branded these ideas as "differential racism," i.e., a racism much more subtle and pernicious than standard biologistic versions.[6]

In the attempt to understand the root causes of the Nazi extermination of European Jewry, Horkheimer and Adorno traced anti-Semitism back to the identity logic of Enlightenment ideology and the very structure of conceptual thinking, which accounts for the title of the book. Abstract universalism, the conceptual counterpart of capital (abstract labor) comes to dominate concrete particularity in the same way that capital dominates labor. That identity logic, according to which the

6. See Pierre-André Taguieff, "Cultural Racism in France," in *Telos* 83 (Spring 1990), pp. 109-122; and his *La Force du Préjugé* (Paris: La Découverte, 1988).

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abstract concept redefines the concrete particular in its own image while delegitimating all that is left out of this exercise in conceptual engineering, corresponds to the logic of capital — to the famous reversal Marx describes in *Capital*, whereby objectified labor (capital) becomes more concrete than the living labor that created it, to the point of redefining the latter as an abstract commodity bought and sold in the market-place. Accordingly, anti-Semitism is treated as a special case of this broader logic. The culturally recalcitrant Jew, who refused to forfeit his particularity in this process of capitalist homogenization, had to go: that which could not be assimilated had to be exterminated. This is why *Dialectic of Enlightenment* concludes by establishing a continuity between fascism and the culture industry as the main agency of managed social integration. Thus, by implication, the culture industry becomes the benign continuation of the exact same project of universal homogenization. Defeated in the battlefield, fascism had won the cultural war. Coupled with the system's ability to satisfy basic needs as well as most artificial ones, Horkheimer and Adorno saw no way out, hence the strategy of theoretical hibernation and the focus on an aesthetic theory glorifying impenetrability (*qua* immunization against instrumentalization) as a substitute for political and social theory.

Today only a handful of diehard Left intellectuals still rave against the culture industry. Redefined as a respectable academic discipline, "popular culture" has long since ceased to be considered the opiate of the masses. It is now a legitimate "terrain of contestation" allegedly providing scores of emancipatory possibilities. The essence of the original Frankfurt School critique, however, has become part and parcel of the French New Right ideology — mostly subsumed under a broader critique of the US and its cultural hegemony. By independently retreading the development of Critical Theory, however, the French New Right falls into some of the same traps. Its critique of the culture industry is tied to a broader anti-Americanism predicated on a serious misunderstanding. Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Benoist is also deceived by how the culture industry represents the US: a sad mixture of Walt Disney, Coca-Cola and McDonald's (although the latter came too late to draw any critical wrath).[7]

Against the US and Christianity

What the French New Right fails to realize is that the sort of cultural

7. See Paul Gottfried, "Alain de Benoist's Anti-Americanism"; and Mark Wegiarsky, "The New Right in Europe," both in this issue of *Telos*.

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particularity it wants to vindicate against that old Left scarecrow, "American Imperialism," is precisely the same American model developed during the 18th century colonial experience. Although gradually eroded and marginalized since the early 19th century, this model remains deeply ingrained in a paradigmatically American ethos still thriving in the more rural areas of the country. The very *raison d'être* of the various American Protestant communities chased out of Europe because of their cultural peculiarities was to guarantee their autonomy and specificity. Why else would these colonies insist on creating a *federal* system after a successful war of independence, rather than developing the same kind of tendentially homogeneous and highly centralized nation as the French did only a few years later (especially since so many of the so-called "Founding Fathers" were greatly influenced by French ideas)?

Since most traditional Americans espousing something resembling the original ethos do not travel abroad much and generally shy away from international politics (they favor various updated versions of that isolationism which sank Woodrow Wilson's internationalist dreams and, more recently, almost succeeded in defeating NAFTA), Europeans see primarily New Class operatives representing the interests of multinational corporations or vacationing cosmopolitan intellectuals. While this helps explain why Europeans have a very one-sided vision of the US, it does not justify the French New Right's ridiculous suggestion of a geopolitical alliance of Europe and the Third World against a US imperialism presumably bent on homogenizing the rest of the world through its human rights and global democratic agenda.

While at one time, under misguided neoconservative advice, former President Bush may have pontificated about a "New World Order," he was succeeded in office by a Democrat who sees no overriding *raison d'état* to bother disciplining genocidal thugs in places such as Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Haiti, etc. Clearly, there is no monolithic US policy, given once and for all. Throughout this century US policy has been torn between internationalism and isolationism.[8] Along with every other country on earth, the US is in flux. In fact, to the extent that it resonates so well with its traditional ethos, the same new political paradigm the French New Right advocates may find in the US an even more fertile soil than in Europe. Not only is the US terminally heterogeneous, but, claims by opportunist multiculturalists to the contrary notwithstanding, it is first and foremost European in its institutions, culture and

8. See Elena Aga-Rossi, "Roosevelt and the Origins of the Cold War," in *Telos* 96 (Summer 1993), pp. 65-85.

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outlook. It does, however, differ from Europe in one fundamental respect rooted deep in its history. Because of its Protestant origins, there is a long tradition of tolerance and heterogeneity predating the country's very birth. Both factors should be appreciated by a French New Right so concerned with defending these values as to redeploy a long gone European paganism against an allegedly totalitarian Christianity considered responsible both for Enlightenment pseudo-universalism and the worst repressive features of communism.

While there is an obvious line running from Catholic universalism through the Enlightenment to liberalism and Marxism, closer scrutiny reveals a much more complex trajectory. First, Christianity itself was never "pure," combining both the tradition of ancient Judaism and Hellenic philosophy. Neither was ever exclusively universalist. Thus, Plato's forms always clashed with the sophists' relativism and, judging from the scores of conflicts reported in the Old Testament, ancient Judaism can hardly be claimed to have been a homogeneous affair. Second, although the pre-Reformation Church did not seem to have had too many qualms about periodically burning heretics at the stake and although the Inquisition has become the paradigm of intense state terror, Catholicism has also been correctly described as a *complexio oppositorum* seeking to reconcile a plethora of conflicting doctrines. Third, as Protestants never tire of reiterating, European paganism was systematically integrated into Catholicism very early on, to the point that "really existing Catholicism" can be considered its legitimate heir. Fourth, even if the Church was the kind of totalitarian proselytizing agency the French New Right assumes, the Reformation put an end to its universalist pretentions once and for all. What was Protestantism about if not the vindication of particularity — even if it ultimately referred to the same God and the same heritage? As in the case of its anti-Americanism, while fully in line with standard Left ideology, the critique of Christianity as terminally totalitarian is indefensible and does not really fit with the rest of the French New Right's positions.

What Can the French New Right Contribute?

Both anti-Americanism and the critique of Christianity are symptomatic of a problematic feature of the New Right in general and Benoist in particular, which may account for (but not justify) some of the Left vigilantes' hostility. As Taguieff has carefully documented, since its creation in 1968 the New Right has changed its positions so often and so drastically that it now confronts a credibility problem. Are

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the new views on race merely rhetorical decoys to legitimate the same old biological racism of a couple of decades earlier? Is "the right to difference" a stratagem to justify a new kind of cultural apartheid meant to guarantee the purity of European (Aryan?) civilization? Is the critique of the nation and the re-discovery of federalism but another means of attacking equality and thereby indirectly relegitimating old hierarchical structures? Is the critique of liberalism ultimately a justification for the standard conservative project of dismantling the centralized redistributive state apparatus? Presumably, the Left vigilantes would answer most if not all of these questions in the affirmative. On the basis of what has been published, there is a remote possibility that they could be right, but this is extremely unlikely. At any rate, no convincing arguments have been provided to that effect and, consequently, it remains idle speculation concerning possible motives. Rational discourse, however, cannot bother with unverifiable motives and must take ideas at face value. What one explicitly says and writes must be considered more important than what can be surmised about what one "really" means, on the basis of conspiracy theories, intuition or just plain suspicion. When and if these sinister meanings are clearly articulated and documented, then they should be criticized and attacked. To do so prematurely is intellectually irresponsible.

Worse yet, the refusal to seriously study and learn from opponents may result in missing what is truly original in their views and, in the particular case of the French New Right, why its ideas are having such a profound impact throughout Europe. A concrete negation always entails the critical appropriation of whatever opponents may have to contribute. Thus, at a time when ethnic strife has already precipitated many countries into brutal civil wars and is threatening many more throughout the world, the French New Right's vindication of a new concept of "ethnicity" — even if clearly unencumbered by old racial, national or naturalistic encrustations — is extremely problematic. This is why it is all the more urgent to understand its implications and inquire into its possible new role within post-Cold War political institutions. While this kind of issues may *prima faciæ* appear as a regression into pre-WWII far Right politics, it is by no means a new problem in the US or Canada, where it has been on the agenda for at least the last couple of decades under the heading of multiculturalism. What distinguishes the French New Right's approach from the US Left's is the critique of liberalism, the theory of the state and, to a lesser extent, the concept of democracy.

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While American multiculturalism acknowledges the irreducibility of different cultural traditions (or the undesirability of subsuming them all under one predominant cultural model, thus coming very close to accepting the French New Right's "right to difference"), it operates entirely within the context of the post-modern liberal state, thus generating a series of insurmountable contradictions. From the French New Right's viewpoint, cultural values are logically prior to political institutions and, in fact, determine them. One need not become embroiled into the intricacies of political theology to acknowledge that, no matter how much its politically correct liberal administration may try to shed so-called "Eurocentric" biases, the US remains the secularized legacy of the Protestant Reformation. Its basic institutions cannot be cut off from such cultural roots without plunging the entire system into chaos. Even if the state were able to shed all axiological residues, the resulting (allegedly strictly procedural) framework would still presuppose particularistic culture-dependant choices. Bottom line: no matter how politically correct it tries to become (i.e., consistent with liberalism's abstract universalism), multiculturalism remains fundamentally incompatible with the liberal state.

The problem with the American political framework can be traced back to the attempt to deploy liberalism at the federal level while allowing its constituting political units (the states) maximum possible space to articulate their cultural particularity within *local* political institutions. In this respect, a version of multiculturalism was inherent in the very structure of American federalism — a structure, surprisingly enough, very similar to the French New Right's version of federalism predicated on "pagan pluralism."[9] From the very beginning, however, it was contradicted by a Bill of Rights presupposing a national constituency and thus ecroaching on the autonomy of the allegedly sovereign federating units. Since the first decades of the 19th century, the US has sought to resolve this contradiction in favor of a *de facto* national model. Such a choice has had spectacular results in the creation of what is today the world's only superpower, but at the cost of undermining its very foundation.

A variation on the contradiction Carl Schmitt identified between liberalism and democracy, multiculturalism (the functional equivalent of democracy) can thrive within the interventionist liberal state only if it is reduced to the celebration of irrelevant folkloristic, culinary and otherwise

9. See Alain de Benoist, "The Idea of Empire," in this issue of *Telos*.

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merely superficial characteristics. When it comes to serious questions such as, e.g., religion, it becomes clear that the contradiction is unresolvable without fundamental constitutional revisions. As can be seen with the controversy surrounding abortion, there is absolutely no way at the federal level to reconcile the conflicting moralities of the parties involved without alienating a significant segment of the populaton, encouraging civil disobedience (even terrorism), and eventually delegitimating the state as such. A plurality of cultures can coexist without either destroying or absorbing one another only if embodied in organic communities, not merely isolated individuals. In the latter case, the outcome is not only the gradual erasure of cultural particularity but the very decomposition of individuality, which explains the inextricable connection in the US between cultural homogenization through the culture industry, the rise of the therapeutic industry, and the progressive disintegration of communities.

Paradoxically — because of its virulent anti-Americanism — the French New Right's articulation of the concept of ethnicity within a "pagan" (i.e., neutral with respect to religious practices) federalism and in connection with a notion of participatory democracy within small and axiologically homogeneous local communities[10] unwittingly recycles the original American model. It does this at a time when most Americans seem to have forgotten it in their uncritical embrace of a liberalism which has become increasingly problematic as a result of its extension throughout the various units of the federation now turned into a *de facto* national state. Even more paradoxical is the realization that some of the more perceptive sectors of the American Left, although apparently unaware of what the French New Left has been advocating, are beginning to come around to roughly similar positions.

Toward a New Left/New Right Reconciliation?

In a recent evaluation of "The Situation of the Left in the United States," Stanley Aronowitz not only calls for dropping socialism in favor of "radical democracy," but begins to obliquely refer to "federalism" as a possible alternative to current quandaries. This is encouraging, although the move seems opportunistic and in bad faith (as it becomes immediately obvious in both the responses and Aronowitz' own reply).[11]

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10. For an account of the French New Right concept of ethnicity, see Dario Durando, "The Rediscovery of Ethnic Identity," in *Telos* 97 (Fall 1993), pp. 21-32.

11. That the shift to radical democracy is not a matter of well thought-out principles but only of the realization that it is no longer possible to sell "socialism" can be

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Even if such were not the case, however, the proposal remains embroiled in a long series of blatant contradictions, undeveloped positions and fashionable (but vacuous) post-modern academic slogans. How is it possible to have radical (or direct, participatory or plebiscitary) democracy without at the same time advocating a rigorous federal system guaranteeing the autonomy of small constituting units — the only ones within which radical democracy can be practiced?[12] And if

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seen in Aronowitz' insistence that members of the polity "share a common set of values." See Stanley Aronowitz, "Replies," in the same isssue of *Socialist Review*. Thus, when it comes to spell out what "radical democracy means," Aronowitz merely recycles old Left platitudes predicated on the naive assumption that somehow people "naturally" espouse traditional socialist values and that socialism would inevitably result if there were no institutional or ideological obstacles to the spontaneous expression of the people's will. The fact that some people may at times opt *democratically* for what he may consider unsavory political forms, such as Nazism or anti-Semitism, never occurs to him. That Nazism and fascism were supported by a substantial majority of Germans and Italians and that, as Lanzman's *Shoah* has shown, anti-Semitism was a very widespread sentiment among most ordinary Polish citizens, does not lead him to realize that the shift to radical democracy erases the distinction between a Left so redefined and a Right which has historically advocated the same thing under the label of "plebiscitary democracy." Furthermore, by demanding that, e.g., radical democracy be "a plural universalism and necessarily internationalist" (p. 27) he reintroduces traditional liberal elements which contradict any kind of "radical democracy." When and who ever voted on this universalism and internationalism? Is it instead a matter of Aronowitz' personal values being arbitrarily ascribed to people as they ought to be rather than how they really are? Is this another version of Berthold Brecht's quip about the politicians electing the people rather than the other way around?

At any rate, it is both ironic and indicative of the theoretical "situation of the Left in the United States" that it took the journal sponsoring the symposium within which Aronowitz' article appeared (and which was optimistically launched over two decades ago with a pretentious title such as *Socialist Revolution)* about one decade to realize the folly of calling for "revolution"in the US and another one to finally dump "socialism." Now that it will probably have to be rebaptized once again as something like *Radical Democratic Review*, it has finally crawled back up to the theoretical level of the SDS Port Huron statement in the early 1960s. Not accidentally, when Aronowitz chides other symposium participants for being theoretically crude and not aware of "the extraordinary developments in recent theory of ideology" he quotes none other than . . . Louis Althusser! (*Ibid*., p. 77). Far from being "recent," although published in English only in 1981, Althusser's ideas on ideology date back to the early 1960s, when he was still desperately trying to legitimate by whatever means necessary the opportunism of the French Communist Party) or "extraordinary," the theory of ideology of the theoretician Tony Judt has snidely dubbed "the Paris Strangler" — both in Marxist theory and marital practices — today rates no better than phrenology.

12. Following practically every political theorist who has written on the subject, Norberto Bobbio has argued that participatory democracy is possible only within small units. Since, however, on the basis of where history seemed to be headed at the time he was writing he also assumed that large states are *unavoidable*, he ended up dismissing participatory democracy: "Rousseau . . . knew as Montesquieu, that direct democracy, the democracy of the *agora* in contrast to the democracy of the parliamentary

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these units are sufficiently small, why should they be prevented from becoming culturally homogeneous, thus prefiguring a plethora of autonomous communities (federated in larger geographically-defined units) perpetuating a plurality of different cultural traditions (the sort of political framework advocated by the New Right)? Similarly, how can one claim to transcend socialism while still assuming "the unity of class and culture"[13] — that crude myth about base and superstructure which constituted the very foundation of orthodox Marxism? At any rate, if and when most of the American Left ever comes to the point of seriously thinking its way through the concept of radical democracy, it will have to reject not only the kind of conformist liberalism it still uncritically accepts (plural universalism and internationalism) but also the centralized nation-state, its superficial concept of culture (as something presumably absorbed, along with toxic chemicals, on the shop floor) and the predominant shallow notion of community as a bunch of abstract individuals coming together on the basis of accidental cultural traits, biology or particular predilections (e.g., gender or sex-orientation).[14]

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chamber, was a regime suited only to small states: states whose size permitted the citizens . . . to assemble in the square. Where are the small states today?" See Norberto Bobbio, "Are There Alternatives to Representative Democracy?" in *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978), p. 19. Are small states aggregated within genuine federal structures (not to be confused with pseudo-federations such as the US, which are *de facto* nation-states) *really* impossible? Could Bobbio have been speaking too soon, before the beginning of the break-up of large geopolitical units? At any rate, these are the questions that any serious proposals for the institutionalization of radical democracy must confront: without the displacement of the nation-state by a true federalism guaranteeing the sovereignty of the federating units there cannot be any real radical democracy.

13. Aronowitz, "Replies," *op. cit.*, p. 144.

14. Notwithstanding all these shortcomings, Aronowitz stands out like a giant within the organized American Left. This, however, may be due to the fact that those surrounding him seem to be all lying down, intellectually asleep. A quick glance at the responses to his proposal reveals not only the breadth of the desert he is trying to irrigate but also the neo-Stalinism still festering within the Left whenever it refuses to collapse outright in a shallow liberalism (such as Dick Flack's, whose stale labor metaphysics betrays a total lack of understanding of the past three decades). None of the other respondants seems to have any better idea concerning what the Left is now about. Most perceptive of all, Barbara Ehrenreich practically acknowledges that without socialism as its goal the Left confronts liberalism's problem: lack of meaning. Unlike the old Faust, however, she does not come to the realization that what she longs for — "conviviality, adventure, self-expression, love" — can only be found in the kind of organic communities being systematically eradicated by the liberalism she still espouses by default. Barbara Epstein is still sufficiently awake to realize that today, long after the disappearance of the aristocracy, there is absolutely nothing inherently "Left" in a call for "radical democracy" (since such a system is equally acceptable to the Right and conducive to the furthering of their agenda). She is honest enough, however, *not* to propose any kind of Jacobin project, not so much out of respect for the autonomy

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Were such a process of theoretical maturation to take place, the remnants of the American New Left might find themselves in practically the same camp as (of all things) not only the *French* New Right but that much despised *American* New Right! Of course, neither Aronowitz not any of the participants in the symposium on "radical democracy" seem to have the faintest idea concerning what exactly constitutes the "Right" — something they identify with the likes of Satan and see as not only all-powerful but triumphant everywhere.[15] Had they bothered to read some of the more sophisticated conservative analysts on the Right, not only would they have discovered that the most interesting branches of the Right — such as the French New Right, if it is still possible to place them anywhere on the Right — have redefined themselves by incorporating about 95% of standard New Left ideas, but that, on the whole, there is no longer anything that can be identified as "Right." As Paul Gottfried argues in the most extensive available account of the status of American conservatism today, there is no longer any such a thing.[16] The differences between paleoconservatives, neoconservatives, the American New Right and conservative libertarians

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of the political subjects themselves but because she has no idea what any such project could be. Not so cautious, Eli Zeretsky ackowledges the "murky" status of his current thinking, but lets it all hang out anyway. Thus he readily ackowledges that he has no qualms about rejecting democracy outright, in favor of "liberal *principles*" and psychology — presumably in order to treat, through "therapy," the "false consciousness" of those who do not find his liberal principles to their liking. This is nothing but the old contradiction of liberalism and democracy, and an expression of the Left's lingering Jacobin tendency to opt for the former when it becomes necessary to choose betwen the two. But what are these liberal values? Maybe Omi's and Winant's "new traditions" of "racial radicalism, feminism and gay liberation," as if these culturally-dependant *social* issues had anything to do with politics, or any living culture could be sustained through them (for a critique of the current axiological crisis of liberalism, see Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism and the Emergence of Federal Populism," in *Telos* 89 [Fall 1991], pp. 7-44]. Most pathological of all, however, is Amarpal Dhaliwal's unbearably opportunistic and empty response. A diatribe against Aronowitz' alleged crime of being white, male, heterosexual and of European descent, her account boils down to a self-serving plea for affirmative action programs for "US third world women" — an ethnic group impossible to trace anywhere on earth other than to the desk of some Washington bureaucrat trying to compile a list of groups for future favored treatment.

Given this state of affairs, the American Left would do well to copy the French New Right in appropriating most of one's opponents' better ideas and reintegrating them within a new theoretical synthesis.

15. Thus Aronowitz speaks about "the rampant victory of the right in US and world politics" (in "Replies," *op. cit.*, p. 143).

16. Paul Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement Revised Edition* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993). See also Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of American Conservatism," in *Telos* 74 (Winter 1987-88), pp. 9-20.

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are even greater than those separating the Left (broadly defined) and the Right (even more broadly defined).[17] As for the alleged "triumph" of the Right, Aronowitz and Co. would do well to read conservative critics such as Samuel Francis, whose recent study of the American Right is accurately titled *Beautiful Losers*.[18]

Such a careful study of the American Right would confirm the French New Right's claim that the Left/Right dichotomy is no longer politically meaningful and that post-Cold War realities call for a new paradigm in political theory. Thus, with a slightly different focus, a symposium on "radical democracy" similar to the previously described one could have been equally held by the American New Right, which recently has also reconsidered some of its political positions. What the liberal media describes as far Right groups, such as "The Christian Coalition," also opt for radical democracy and local self-determination, and have broadened their scope to include orthodox Jews as well as other equally "conservative" religious groups within their fold. Surprisingly enough, they have become the most vocal anti-central government group in the US, demanding local autonomy as a way to preserve their particular cultural values. More radical than the remnants of the New Left, the American New Right calls for a thorough decentralization of the educational system, to the point of making it completely independent of the state (also a traditional anarchist position), local self-determination, a radical reduction of state interference in social policy, and fiscal autonomy. If education has to do, among other things, with the transmission of values, and radical democracy means local self-determination, what can be objectionable to teaching creationism, having school prayers and whatever other locally-mandated practices, unless one introjects a liberalism which necessarily contradicts democracy by positing absolute values beyond direct democratic self-determination?[19]

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17. See Chris Woltermann, "What is Paleoconservatism?" in *Telos* 97 (Fall 1993), pp. 9-20.

18. Samuel Francis, *Beautiful Losers: Essays on the Failure of American Conservatism* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1993).

19. The key in questions of this kind is what constitutes the legitimate constituency, and ultimately the right to secession. To the extent that radical democracy can be practiced effectively only within small units, a serious commitment to it must privilege small localities or constituencies and therefore support cultural particularity (e.g., Christian fundamentalism or Jewish orthodoxy, if the local communities in question happen to be overwhelmingly of that particular cultural persuasion). Consequently, the Left's shift to radical democracy not only entails having to argue for, e.g., the Confederacy's right to secede (and also, *after* secession, for the North's right to declare

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Historically, the American New Right's Achilles heel has been what the French New Right sees as the basic flaw in all of Christianity — a totalitarian committment to impose its own values everywhere. Considering itself the underdog, the Christian Coalition seems to have given up its universal aspirations and, although it still seeks to convert the whole world to "the one and only true faith," in a return to traditional Protestant tolerance it now accepts a broad spectrum of differences. With the exception of abortion, against which it remains adamantly and obsessively opposed, on practically every other issue it may not in principle object to a New Left reconfigured around radical democracy, cultural self-determination and federal governance (even on abortion, in order to be consistent with its commitment to the right to self-determination and federalism, it will have to accept the legitimacy of other particular communities sanctioning the practice, if they do so on the basis of local democratic mandates). Allowed to control education, housing, welfare and cultural life in general in its own communities, the Christian Coalition will still vigorously condemn secularism, abortion, homosexuality and other non-Christian practices, but it will probably learn to live with them in other territorially defined communities.

Obviously, an immense amount of micro-differences remain between people who have for most of their lives identified with either the Left or the Right. But if suddenly everyone seems to be able to agree on fundamental principles, such as self-determination, radical democracy and federalism, who are the real enemies? What happened to the opposition? Once again, the French New Right seems to be onto something when it contraposes a universalizing New Class seeking to impose an abstract liberal agenda on everyone, and populists wanting to live their lives in their communities, with their particular cultures, institutions, religions etc. Is such a vision viable for post-industrial societies totalized by new communication technologies, intensified economic interaction and considerable social and geographical mobility? Will it not entail a regression from what many regard as humankind's major achievements, such as human rights, science, technology, etc.? Maybe. But if these achievements do not have a direct impact of

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war on it because of its practice of slavery), but also for a plethora of what, from a traditional Left perspective, can only be regarded as highly questionable social practices. Far from Aronowitz' rosy picture of happy workers democratically electing their managers and determining an equitable distribution of revenues (see "The Situation of the Left," *op. cit.*, p. 27), radical democracy entails the specter of occasionally also having to legitimate slavery, bigotry, etc.

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people's lives and, as the French New Right claims, they tend to develop into new and more sophisticated means of domination, then it may be wise to leave it to the people themselves, as integral parts of functioning communities and cultures (rather than as abstract individuals deprived of all those concrete cultural particularities which makes them truly human) to decide whether and to what an extent to buy into them — no matter how "backward," "barbaric" or "primitive" these particular choices may seem from extraneous cultural viewpoints. If the true, the good and the beautiful are objective entities, then people will eventually find them on their own, with the assistance of their own "experts," without having them imposed from above by those who pretend to know better.

No matter what answers one may give to these questions, one thing is clear: far from constituting any kind of public danger, as the Left vigilantes claim, the French New Right, notwithstanding its obsessive opposition to any kind of administratively imposed equality (which may be its only remaining link with the Old Right) has made a significant contribution at a time when original ideas are hard to come by. As such, it deserves to be taken seriously rather than censured by self-righteous *apparatchiks* unable or unwilling to deal with rational arguments on their own grounds.

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Left Vigilance in France

Frank Adler

The "appeal to vigilance" against the resurgence of the far Right, launched by forty Left intellectuals last summer, generated one of the most bizarre ideological controversies France has witnessed since the threshold year of 1981, when the Left joyously came to power pledging to "change life." Coming four months after the Left's worst electoral debacle in recent memory, the Appeal may mark the end of a political era and signal the final demise of the *engagé* intellectual identified with Sartre. The message was that the rise in racism and the resurgence of the far Right were due essentially to the Left's lack of vigilance against the growing legitimation of the far Right, and that this had occurred because some Left intellectuals had deviated from orthodoxy in considering other explanations and had debated these issues with an intellectual of the New Right (Alain de Benoist). This non-conformism had the effect of creating confusion regarding what the Left really meant and where it stood, while at the same time, and consequently, conferring legitimacy upon the far Right which advocated exclusion, violence and crime. In other words, there was no need to re-examine the Left's traditional analysis, which remained fundamentally sound; just discipline those whose non-conformity was responsible, directly or indirectly, for increased racism and the resurgence of the far Right. For other Left intellectuals this orthodox call to arms and vigilantism was not only unacceptable but quite *passé*.

Le Monde, which published the Appeal on July 13, used a confusing format. The lead for the text itself read "The Debate over Resurgence," yet the actual appeal, written in the ham-fisted style of a *comité du salut*

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publique, called for vigilance, an immediate cessation of all debate, and isolation of the enemy. Curiously, beyond general claims regarding the resurgence of the far Right and how this was leading to incitements to "exclusion, violence and crime," the appeal identified no specific targets, texts, statements or acts, and thus offered no way of demonstrating precisely how such specific persons, texts, statements or acts actually led to exclusion, violence and crime. A strange way to launch a debate! Who and what was in question? It should be noted, moreover, that those who signed the appeal (the so-called *vigilants*) remained silent regarding "the specifics" in subsequent public statements, and remained on a plane devoid of substance yet ominous in tone. Thus, for example, Norbert Bensaid and K. S. Karol, given space in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (which remained editorially hostile to the appeal), submitted a short piece (entitled "The Virtue of Intolerance") totally devoid of substance, but defending the virtues of mistrust against those who were "confusing" ideas, leading to a progressive demobilization and the "insidious abandonment of Left values" in the face of intolerance, exclusion and injustice.[1] Another *vigilant*, Arlette Farge, wrote a long article for *Le Monde* (November 24, 1993) regarding five hundred letters the vigilant committee had received expressing "a veritable emotive resonance" against "the intellectuals' laxity," their "complicity," as well as concern over "the disappearance of opposition between Left and Right." Yet beyond invoking solidarity, Farge offers no specifics, names no names, makes no analysis; apparently expressed solidarity (the purported "we" on the Left) is intended to do the work of careful argumentation — a curious stance for an intellectual.

What were the unarticulated grounds upon which the appeal was based? Precisely what was its explanation for the rise of racism and the resurgence of the far Right? What was this essential though unspecified "Left" core which was being confused? After all, confusionism and laxity had to refer to *something*. And if that essential core, on the one hand, was simply the theory and practice of the Left, while, on the other, racism and "exclusion" were intrinsically phenomena of the Right, how might the *vigilants* account for the fact that such "rightist" practices were not at all foreign to the history of the Left, as Zeev Sternhell and others have demonstrated? That long history notwithstanding, how could the *vigilants* explain, for example, the action of the communist mayor of Vitry-sur-Seine, who in 1980 who used his power to bulldoze

1. *Le Nouvel Observateur*, No.1508, (September 30-October 6, 1993).

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a dormitory housing African immigrants? Or the blatantly racist campaign the French Communist Party (PCF) ran during the presidential election of 1981, sensing an opportunity to exploit popular xenophobia? As Martin Schain has argued, "Virtually the same rhetoric that was used so effectively by the Front National was first used by the Communist Party and some of its representatives in 1980-81."[2] What the National Front did in 1983 was what the PCF had attempted shortly before. They just did it better. Could one see no relation between the two phenomena, apparently independent of the Left-Right distinction? In any case, obviously more is entailed in a serious analysis of racism than linking it simply, exclusively, and necessarily to the Right.

Perhaps the most perplexing aspect of the way in which *Le Monde* presented the appeal was an accompanying long essay by Roger-Pol Droit ("The Confusion of Ideas"), presumably a descriptive account of the appeal (the subtitle: "Faced with the Popularization of the New Right's Views, Forty Intellectuals Call for a 'Vigilant Europe' ." In fact, the author sheds no light on the appeal itself or the *vigilants* (e.g., how did it come to be written and circulated, who was the initiating group and what were those solicited told? Did all those solicited actually read the text, who specifically did the *vigilants* want to target and what incriminating materials did they have in mind?). Instead, Droit, who did not himself sign the appeal, went on the attack (leading to confusion as to whether he was speaking for the *vigilants* or for himself). In any event, Droit apparently let the cat out of the bag (none of the *vigilants* publicly refuted his charges or distanced themselves from claims made in his article): the primary targets were not Jean-Marie Le Pen, or intellectuals directly associated with the National Front, but Alain de Benoist, leading intellectual of the New Right, and Pierre-André Taguieff, France's preeminent expert on racism and the far Right, who, as it were, was one of those "useful idiots" on the Left Benoist was able to instrumentalize into legitimating the far Right and its alleged invitation to "exclusion, violence and crime." Taguieff, moreover, had repeatedly criticized the theoretical and practical shortcomings of orthodox Left anti-racism; that in reducing anti-racism to anti-fascism, the Left was unable to grasp the changed nature of contemporary racism based on cultural difference, not biology. Accordingly, Taguieff argued that the Left had been impotent in combating both the increase in racism and

2. Martin Schain, "The National Front in France and the Construction of Political Legitimacy, *West European Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April 1987), pp. 238-239.

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the ascendancy of the National Front, which exploited popular dissatisfaction by scapegoating immigrants.

Taguieff's primary contribution was to demonstrate how the National Front had appropriated and vulgarized the New Right's concept of the right to difference.[3] No explicit claims were made that the French were superior to other nations, they simply were *different* and had a right to preserve that difference; in fact, the same claim (in reverse) that left-wing anthropologists like Robert Jaulin made in his defense of Third World cultures against *ethnocide* on the part of Western imperialist powers. Thus the "native" French had a right to preserve the integrity of their culture against the "invasion" of Third World immigrants, the primary source of all France's ills. This was a new and highly effective way of rendering racism (illegitimate in its biological-hierarchical form) acceptable; it became the basis of the National Front's program.

The doctrinal source behind this move had nothing whatsoever to do with "fascism" as such. Therefore Left accusations of fascism or Nazism simply missed the mark, they had nothing to do implicitly or explicitly with the National Front's ideology, even though the Left could claim that this ideology was "objectively" fascist and thus attempt to stretch the concept to fit the case. Ironically, the National Front appropriated, reformulated and deployed a concept of difference which initially had been associated not only with the Left, but also with France's most distinguished anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss. In a 1971 UN address, Lévi-Strauss argued that a distinction must be made between racism as a doctrine and a certain degree of ethnocentrism which is not only natural but also inevitable. In the preface to *The View from Afar*, he reiterated the central point of that address: "One cannot put in the same category, or impute automatically to the same prejudice,

3. This is an argument Taguieff has made in countless journal articles and interviews. Its fullest articulation is found in his *La Force du Préjugé* (Paris: La Découverte, 1987). See also the two-volume anthology he edited, *Face au Racisme* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991). The right to difference was one of Benoist's formative themes, reflecting his view that the New Right should orient itself around the phenomenon of social differentiation. In this sense, the Right would be identified with difference and particularity, as opposed to the universalizing and homogenizing commitments of the Left. Its earliest articulations may be found in *Vu de droite* (Paris: Copernic, 1977) (for which the author won the Grand Prix de l'Essai in 1978 from the Académie Française), and *Les Idées à l'Endroit* (Paris: Editions Libres/Hallier, 1979) published a year later. The right to difference was applied to different domains (biology, culture, philosophy, politics) throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and remains fundamental to Benoist's thinking. For an excellent overview, see the second chapter (Itinéraire d'un intellectuel atypique: Alain de Benoist) of Taguieff's *Sur la Nouvelle Droite* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 1994).

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the attitude held by individuals or groups that their loyalty to certain values makes them partially or totally insensitive to other values. It is not at all invidious to place one way of life or thought above all others or to feel little drawn to other people or groups whose ways of life, respectable in themselves, are quite remote from the system to which one is traditionally attached. Such relative incommunicability certainly does not authorize anyone to oppress or destroy the values one has rejected, or their representatives; but within these limitations, it is not at all repugnant. It may even be the price to be paid so that the systems of values of each spiritual family or each community are preserved and find within themselves the resources necessary for their renewal."[4] It is this "legitimate" source which is cited by National Front ideologues, not Hitler or Rosenberg. It is immune to facile charges of fascism. Having studied this ideological transition, Taguieff has insisted on reformulating the concept of racism and rethinking a strategy to combat it. The *vigilants*, fixated on maintaining Left orthodoxy, charge him with *confusionnisme*, of promoting — as they put in the appeal — "the supposed disappearance of any political gap between the Left and the Right, of the alleged resurgence of ideas concerning the nation and cultural identity." Conflating the analysis with the object of analysis, and accusing Taguieff of helping legitimate the far Right, the *vigilants* would ban the very basis for developing a new and more effective means by which to fight racism. Maintaining orthodoxy, apparently, is a higher priority.

Le Monde's role in the appeal itself was also suspect. First of all, one of its lead reporters, Alain Rollat, had interviewed Benoist in May 1992 on issues directly pertaining to immigrants, racism and his position on the National Front. In this interview, Benoist unequivocally condemned the National Front, expressed solidarity with immigrants, and called for tolerance, a position he has maintained consistantly in interviews and in writing since 1990, and for which he has been frontally attacked by Le Pen's *literati*. The interview, after having been reviewed by *Le Monde*'s editorial board, was never published, though it did surface elsewhere.[5] Never did any of his accusers document a single instance when Benoist, directly or indirectly, advocated "exclusion, violence and crime." Despite the closest of scrutiny, there was no "smoking gun." Instead, there

4. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The View from Afar* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. xiv. For an excellent critique of Lévi-Strauss' position, see Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 60-89.

5. The interview appeared in *Diorama* (September 1993), along with another originally published in *Junge Freiheit*. Both are translated in this issue of *Telos* and published together with an additional interview by the *Telos* Staff.

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was abundant evidence to the contrary.[6] Moreover, ten days before it ran the appeal, *Le Monde* (July 3, 1993) published a rather incredible article by René Monzat which set the stage for what was to follow: "The New Right's SS Ritual in which GRECE Immerses its Followers in the Symbolic Universe of Nazi Paganism." Monzat deployed the most crude and simplistic strategy of guilt by association. GRECE (*Groupement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne*), the main New Right group Benoist had helped found, believed in paganism; the SS believed in paganism; thus GRECE = Nazism. The ritualistic object in question, the so-called *tour de Jul*, was the key to deciphering this "hidden link" (despite the fact that the *tour de Jul* was broadly associated in Northern Europe with the pagan origins of Christmas, the "Yuletide celebration").[7]

If the *vigilants* were truly concerned with combating the rise of racism, xenophobia and the ascendancy of groups like the National Front, presumably they would appreciate the fact that an intellectual of the Right with considerable European stature and influence like Benoist might indeed be useful, if only from a narrowly instrumental intent of combating the Right through a strategy of *divide et impera*? In other words, from a Left perspective Benoist is precisely the type of rightist one would prefer, rather than a Le Pen or worse. Why then was

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6. Some examples: "Interview on the National Front," in *Le Monde* (June 17-18, 1984), "We do not place ourselves on the same plane, we do not address the same public, and, as for ideas in those rare realms where the National Front makes theirs known, they strike me as totally foreign to ours." "Interview on the National Front," in *Choc du mois*, No. 31 (July-August, 1990), "I feel very much a stranger to this movement. I recognize in it no ideas which are my own and which give a sense to my life. I think that the Right has always been threatened by falling into four faults: liberalism, moralism, integralism and racism. I fear the National Front, a nationalist-populist party which presents itself basically as a veritable ideological patchwork, falling more or less into all these four faults at the same time." *Éléments*, No.72 (Winter 1991), "The theses of the National Front personally make me nauseous. Scapegoating is unbearable. To say that the core of the problems which our society today confronts is caused by the presence of immigrants on our national soil is simply grotesque. If there were not a single immigrant in France, we would have exactly the same problems."

7. *Le Monde* also asked Monzat to review Taguieff's new book on the New Right (*Sur La Nouvelle Droite*). Monzat's review, which appeared on March 19, 1994 ("The Masks of the New Right"), attacked Taguieff for confining himself to the *apparent* "external discourse" of GRECE — which presented it as becoming more moderate — while neglecting the *real* "internal discourse." Monzat, a former Trotskyite, has a conspiratorial imagination and continues to invoke cabals and "secret rituals," but never manages to cough up proof. That *Le Monde* would choose a hack like Monzat, and not a serious scholar, to review a substantial work on the New Right once again underlines its partisan role in the controversy.

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he made the devil incarnate, a *néo-nazi masqué*, the real enemy? Why is it, for the *vigilants*, that the "real" Benoist must be linked to the National Front, though the "apparent" Benoist has repeatedly and insistently condemned it? Could it be because the empirical Benoist was living disconfirmation of the Left's simplistic and anachronistic reduction of racism to anti-fascism, of its stereotypical, undifferentiated view of the Right, of the very fact he was not in actuality what their relentless intolerance convinced them he must be? Worse still, if they acknowledged even formally that Benoist too attacked racism, xenophobia and the real danger, the National Front, would that not blur the very Maginot Line between Left and Right that the *vigilants* so desperately wanted to preserve against all confusionism and laxity?

Thus it is no accident that Benoist is attacked so vehemently from the orthodox Left at the very moment he has become ever more open in his views concerning immigrants and cultural pluralism. In a special issue of *Éléments* on immigration, published shortly before the appeal, Benoist called for solidarity with immigrants who are the victims, not the cause of France's problems. If there is a problem with French identity, he argued, this was essentially a fault of the French themselves, homogenized by one-dimensionality and American cultural imperialism. The French should reconcile themselves to the fact that immigrants were there to stay, and not entertain any illusion of them returning to their countries of origin. Therefore, France needed to embrace cultural pluralism; the traditional notion of a "republic, one and indivisible," should be replaced by a "federal republic of the French people." The reason for juvenile delinquency among immigrants, very much the focus of media attention, is due to uprooting, the disintegration of their ethnic communities. Thus, he argues, they derive their models from American images and music (the Bronx, *eldorado des déracinés*, and rap), not from their own distinctive roots. Prototypes for the reconstituted ethnic communities to comprise this new "federal republic of the French people," he suggests, are Jews and Vietnamese who have adapted successfully to modern life without losing their particularity, and it is that very particularity, that rootedness in a community, which checks anti-social behavior and provides the basis for self and group affirmation.[8] Needless to say, these are hardly the prescriptions of a neo-Nazi, but well in advance of the universally pejorative sense with which the French today use the term multi-culturalism (most often dismissed as *connerie américaine*).

8. *Éléments*, No. 77, "Special Twentieth Anniversary Issue on Immigration," pp. 44-47, 50-52, 58-62.

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A related question, and far more sinister, is why was it necessary to go after Benoist at a time when he and the New Right have never been weaker and more isolated on the French Right? Compared to their emergence during the summer of 1979, when they were a potential force to be reckoned with, the New Right's space on the Right has been largely pre-empted by the dramatic rise of the National Front, a party practically unnoticed until it successfully put immigration on the national political agenda in 1983. In other words, there was no need for an appeal against Benoist; he already was excluded effectively from the "legitimate" public sphere. Unlike 1979, when the newly-established *Figaro Magazine* served as a mass circulation vehicle for the New Right, Benoist's views are now expressed only in limited-circulation vehicles like *Éléments* and *Krisis* (whose broad cultural themes and ideologically heterogeneous array of contributors have little direct relevance to the more limited set of issues which traditionally concerned the New Right). In other words, it is highly unlikely that the appeal was directed against Benoist, but rather Taguieff, who then would become an example of how non-conformist intellectuals of the Left would be treated if they stepped out of line. The appeal, and particularly Droit's reponses to critical letters to *Le Monde*, made it perfectly clear that no "apparent" abstract subterfuges like academic freedom were to be respected in the face of "real" political exigencies; for these quaint academic notions only contributed to "laxity" and confusionism.

Strategically, this was the *vigilants'* greatest mistake. Few French intellectuals were prepared to go to the mat for a marginalized right-wing intellectual like Benoist, but with Taguieff it was another story, and for two important reasons: first, Taguieff's well-deserved reputation for scholarship of the highest quality and intellectual integrity; second, recognition, on the part of other intellectuals, and especially those working on issues of racism and the far Right, that they, personally, and their scholarship too were at risk if this "principled intolerance" on the part of the self-proclaimed *vigilants* were successful. This accounts for an outpouring of public support for Taguieff, as well as a remarkable collective letter published in *L'Esprit* (January 1994) signed by sixty-nine scholars who, unlike those who signed the appeal, were actually knowledgeable in those areas most closely under fire (WWII, the Algerian War, Islam, communism, immigration, racism, anti-Semitism, and the far *Right*). Those who signed this letter in support of Taguieff and *l'éthique de la vérité*, most of whom are identified with the Left, represent a veritable

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"who's who" in these fields.[9]

What is particularly significant here is the rise (or maybe the reassertion) of a new type of French intellectual, fundamentally different from the dogmatic prototype identified with Sartre and the other *engagés* of the immediate post-war generation, so justly criticized in Tony Judt's *Past Imperfect*,[10] the prototype in fact embodied in the appeal. Symptomatic of this transition was a discussion of "*La Pensée en 1993*" on the part of Left intellectuals in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (September 30-October 6, 1993) in the midst of the appeal controversy. The consensus was, as Jean-Claude Milner put it, that the old prototype "strongly committed and strongly on the Left" is no more. Rather than the sharp boundary which once divided categories like Left and Right, according to Edgar Morin, there now existed an intellectual diaspora, multi-layered, complex and no longer so ideologically aggregated. In fact, commenting on the appeal, Morin suggested with the wisdom reflecting his many years on the Left: "The more the real Left is ill, the more it invokes this ideal Left. And to reinvigorate it, the *vigilants* invoke the reappearance of 'the enemy,' the fascist Right, denouncing its camouflages, and believe that they have found in Alain de Benoist its *deus ex machina*, and in Paul Yonnet and Pierre-André Taguieff his more or less abused servants."

This new "non-integral" intellectual appears intent (or resigned) to live with a necessary tension between political commitments and a critical spirit, a spirit far closer to Raymond Aron (whose *Mémoires* seem to be increasingly popular) than Sartre. Perhaps, as Jacques Julliard notes, this transition was already evident at the time of their famous "reconciliation" in June 1979, at a demonstration in support of the Vietnamese boat people.[11] No sooner did this symbolic embrace between old student-day friends fade from the media than Sartre in an interview denounced Aron as an "enemy of the working class."[12] Sartre's

9. A partial list of those who signed the letter includes Pierre Hassner, Gilles Kepel, Nonna Mayer, Gérard Noiriel, Henry Rousso, Emmanuel Todd, Dominique Schnapper, Bruno Étienne, Pierre Rosanvallon, Patrick Weil, Michel Wieviorka, and Michel Winock. Given the political thrust of the Appeal, one is struck by the rather timid and limited nature of the *Esprit* letter, concerned as it is solely with the corporate interests of scholars, and not with *l'éthique de la vérité* in the broader context, which might have extended intellectual solidarity with Benoist, despite political differences, since his work was distorted far more grievously than that of Taguieff.

10. Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

11. Jacques Julliard, "Un Mouvement de Balancier," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, No. 1508 (September 30-October 6, 1993), pp. 13-14.

12. Raymond Aron, *Mémoires: 50 Ans de Réflexion Politique* (Paris: Julliard, 1983), p. 987.

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time had already ended, having passed from a final phase of Maoist absurdity to terminal political senility, his wooden categories were totally out of touch with reality.

In reaction to the appeal, French intellectuals might reflect seriously upon their public function and special responsibility, as intellectuals, to combat political conformism and transcend the slogans, falsifications and half-truths of partisan orthodoxy. Their role is to criticize, to demystify. As Norberto Bobbio put it in another though not totally dissimilar situation: "For the intellectual there is but one form of betrayal or desertion: the acceptance of arguments by 'politicians' without discussing them, the complicity with propaganda, the dishonest use of knowingly ambiguous language, the abdication of real intelligence before sectarian opinion."[13]

What sense, then, can be made of the appeal? As Morin suggested, essentially it reflects the crisis of the Left which, after a decade in power, had run out of ideas and projects, as well as the capacity to articulate a credible program to sell to an increasingly impatient and volatile electorate. It would seem that there is nothing "affirmative" left of the Left (the emancipatory role of the proletariat, socialization, the plan, really existing socialism, social democracy, socialist realism, *autogestion*) which is why a "negative" anti-fascism was the last desperate card to be played. Before 1981, during a period of long-term opposition, it could claim to stand for something different and present itself as a real alternative to Gaullism, which during the 1970s had gone into crisis, becoming increasingly static and unresponsive to the new social needs generated from below and articulated by emergent social movements (youth, ecology, peace, women, gays). This is why such hopes and expectations were raised that the Left, upon assuming power, would indeed "change life." It soon became apparent, however, that the Left in power would at best represent "Gaullism with a Human Face."[14] Soon there was a demobilization of social movements, Gaullist *énarques* were replaced by their socialist counterparts at the pinnacles of power, scandals and affairs of every sort surfaced (Greenpeace, Carrefour, Luchaire, Société Générale, Péchiney, Tapie and Bérégovoy). In fact, little remains of the socialist legacy except for limited regional reform and tasteless architectural projects in Paris (to be fair, these are no worse than the grotesque constructions of the Pompidou years). In the end, French voters threw the Left out (between 1988 and 1993, the socialists lost

13. Norberto Bobbio, *Politica e Cultura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), p. 20.
14. See Moishe Gonzales, "Gaulism with a Human Face," in *Telos* 55 (Spring 1993).

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more than four million votes). Though the votes for the right reached a historic record (57% in the first *tour*; 63.3% in the second), it was clear that the right received no "mandate" as such to rule. Rather the Spring 1993 election was a humiliating rejection of the Left.

Before the election, as polls looked increasingly dismal for the Left, Michel Rocard promised a "big bang" effort to rethink and reconstitute the socialists. Both before and after the election the Left press ran innumerable articles on the theme "rethink the Left." But nothing of substance emerged. As for the issues raised in the appeal, the Balladur government — in the short term — will succeed in taking the wind out of Le Pen's sails through Minister of the Interior Pasqua's unimaginative "get tough" policies on illegal immigrants and citizenship. However, little will come of it; racism and xenophobia will continue until these pressing problems are seriously confronted — unburdened by threadbare slogans, ritualistic invocations of past solidarities, false accusations, and threats of excommunication. Within such a context, Benoist's work and the analyses developed by the New Right will probably provide the proper point of departure.

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*Discussion or Inquisition? The Case of Alain de Benoist**

Pierre-André Taguieff

In many respects, Alain de Benoist is a political and intellectual turncoat. During the 1960s, his political culture revolved around radical anti-communism and a nationalism *à la* Charles Maurras (vying with a supra-national, post-national perspective). His "worldview," centered on the "defense of the West," was based on "scientific racism" (the theory of race revised by Mendelian genetics and a differential psychology of intelligence) and a eugenic project situated at the core of the "biopolitics" of the future.[1] During the 1970s, he gradually broke with biologism[2] and distanced himself from anti-communism — the dominant political thinking in various groups on the Right — to the point of characterizing liberalism and the US (the embodiment of consumer society) as the "main enemy."[3] By defending and explaining "cultural identities" and "organic communities" or ethnic groups, he advanced a radical critique of nationalism and its cult of the nation-state, especially in its republican/Jacobin form. He denounced it in particular because it destroys cultural "specificities" or "particularisms."[4] His defense of "organic

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* Abstracted from Pierre-André Taguieff, *Sur La Nouvelle Droite: Jelons d'une Analyse Critique* (Paris: Descartes & Co., 1994), pp. 314-336. Translated by Deborah Cook.

1. See especially the unsigned editorials which can be attributed to Alain de Benoist in *Nouvelle Ecole*, No. 9 (June-July-August, 1969); No. 14 (January-February, 1971) pp. 9-12.
2. See "Contre Tous les Racismes," in *Éléments*, Nos. 8-9 (November, 1974-February, 1975) pp. 13-18.
3. See *Nouvelle Ecole*, Nos. 27-28 (Fall-Winter, 1975) pp. 9-96; *Éléments*, No. 41 (March-April, 1982) pp. 37-40, 45-48.
4. See "L'Enracinement," in *Idées à l'Endroit* (Paris: Editions Libres/Hallier, 1979),

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democracy"[5] and his surprising adoption of a "right-wing pro-Third World stance"[6] must be understood in light of this "ethno-pluralism."

The enemy of communism and critic of the "Marxification" of the European mind thus became a defender of threatened or minority "cultural identities," the partisan of a European alliance with the Third World against "American" (or, rather, "Ameriform") imperialism, a critic of the misdeeds of "consumer society," utilitarian values, and the exclusive power of "money."[7] The rejection of anti-communism was supplemented with the rejection of the anti-fascist ideology inherited from the far Right. Communists were transformed from absolute enemies into legitimate interlocutors as long as they remained resolute opponents of capitalism and accepted "debate" or "dialogue."[8] The

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pp. 134-141; "The Idea of Empire," in this issue of *Telos*; "Le Droit à la Différence," in *Éléments*, No. 77 (April, 1993), pp. 24-25; and, in the same issue, the dossier on "immigration": "Qu'est-ce que l'Identité?" pp. 44-47; "Pluralisme ou Assimilation?" p. 50-52; "Citoyenneté, Nationalité, Intégration," pp. 53-57; "Le Modèle Communautaire," pp. 58-62.

5. *Éléments*, No. 52 (Winter, 1983) pp. 33-35; *Démocratie: Le Problème* (Paris: Le Labyrinthe, 1985).

6. *Éléments*, Nos. 48-9 (Winter 1983-4) pp. 15-40; *Europe, Tiers-Monde, Même Combat* (Paris: R. Leffont, 1986)

7. See *Éléments*, No. 50 (Spring-Summer, 1984) pp. 43-48; *Krisis*, No. 12 (October, 1992) pp. 2-12. The political translation of anti-utilitarianism is increasingly marked by a pro-ecological stance. See Alain de Benoist, "Une Remise en Cause Salutaire des Valeurs Marchandes"; "Ecologie?" in *Éléments*, No. 66 (September-October, 1989) pp. 40-47; "L'Ecologie Contre le March," *Éléments*, No. 79 (January, 1994).

8. Let us take a closer look at the alleged "flirtation" between the "far Left" — the "reds" — and the far Right — the "browns." On the "red" side, the accused include: the *Libération* journalist and CGT unionist, Jean-Paul Cruse, author of an article with the provocative title "Vers un Front National" (*L'Idiot International*, May 1993), identified as being "close" to the French Communist Party; and Marc Cohen, then editor-in-chief of *L'Idiot International*, a member of the French Communist Party. Neither are leaders of any political movement. They only represent themselves; they are marginals or "originals" in the communist orbit. As for the "browns" (journalists are unsure whether to call them "nationalists" or "fascist intellectuals from GRECE), they are embodied exclusively in the person of Benoist (sometimes together with Alain Sanders, who, despite his dreams of being a war "hero" and never passing up an occasion to be photographed in a military uniform with his "bush," is the author of the entirely inoffensive pamphlet).

Let us also consider the facts concerning a "meeting" or an "alliance" between them. In the view of harried (or interested) investigators, the so-called "national- communist" threat in France is confirmed by three facts whose lack of significance should not be overestimated. First, an intervention by Benoist on May 12, 1992 during a debate at the Mutualité on the "reawakening of critical thought." This debate was organized by the Institute of Marxist Research (directed by Francette Lazard). Then the participation of Marc Cohen in a debate, organized at the Musée Social (Paris) by the journal *Éléments* on May 19, 1992, on the "recomposition of the French intellectual landscape."

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disappearance of the Soviet threat in 1989/90 only accelerated this process, which consisted in polemical convergences (especially anti-Americanism) and reciprocal political and philosophical interests.[9] Nevertheless, these meetings between a dissident from the far Right (Benoist) and more or less heretical communists remain atypical. Their marginality is reflected in the insignificance of their refusal to accept the idea that "America" is the fate of the planet at a time when American hegemony imposes itself unchallenged and when "global" democratism is confused with triumphant plutocratism. Whatever truth this may have, this is the main argument shared by pro-Third World "revolutionary conservatives" and post-Stalinist communist revolutionaries.

These few rare "dialogues" and editorial contiguities between Benoist and the communists were exploited in June and July 1993 in the context of a strange press campaign whose object was to denounce an alleged "national-communist" danger in France.[10] It is legitimate to

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Finally, the publication in *Krisis* (No. 12, October, 1992, pp. 60-71) of a really unexpected (and not objectively humorless) "face to face" between Jean-Paul Jouary (member of the French Communist Party and editor-in-chief of the bi-monthly *Révolution*) and Paul-Loup Sulitzer, the self-made man (the debate concerned "money").

Grounded on such indecisive "facts," whose marginality deprives them of any exemplary value, the idea of "dangerous liaisons" between "reds" and "browns," or of the convergence or alliance of "extremes" (an old cliché which is hardly rejuvenated) nonetheless became a journalistic banality in 1993. A literature written by overnight experts on the question quickly appeared, privileging one of the obsessive themes in the rhetoric about the "conspiratorial" Left (the one which thinks it can explain everything by conspiracy): the theme of "bridges" between the Right and the far Right which on this occasion became one of the bridges between the Left and the far Right. See, for example, Thierry Maricourt's pathetic essay which mixes ignorance and naiveté with sectarian arrogance: *Les Nouvelles Passerelles de l'Extrême Droit: Idées et Mouvements Passerelles Entre la Gauche et l'Extrême Droit* (Levallois-Perret: Manya, 1993). This bad piece, edited using a compilation of undigested press files (themselves based on compilations adorned with rumors), nonetheless became one of the sources (cited or not) of press articles about the fictional threat of "national-communism." Collective illusion or fakery?

9. See the encounter organized by *Krisis* between Jean-Paul Jouary, editor-in-chief of the bi-monthly *Révolution* and Paul-Loup Sulitzer on the "power of money": "La Fin et les Moyens," No. 12 (October, 1992) pp. 60-71. The neo-fascist reaction was clear: "One does not dine with the devil except with a long spoon, and any intellectual drifting toward former Marxists . . . would be intrinsically perverse." See "Les Sirènes du National-communisme," in *Militant* (July 15, 1993), p. 2, editorial.

10. Didier Daeninckx (former member of the French Communist Party), author of detective novels, and Mariette Bernard, journalist, circulated a file in May and June, 1993 on the "dangerous liaisons" between communists and people reputed to be on the "far Right." See "Quand Daeninckx alerte Marchais du complot," in *Globe* (June 30-July 6, 1993), p. 22. Obviously, the so-called "liaisons" are only judged "dangerous" for genuine communist militants guilty of being "naive" in the face of the underhanded "cultural strategies" of the "far Right." The incorruptible Georges Marchais

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claim that there is a problem with national-communist tendencies or "temptations" in Serbia or Russia, in Romania or Albania. But the attempt to pose the threat of a "national-communist" pseudo-conspiracy in France, paired with appeals to be especially "vigilant" in the face of an allegedly new wave of "national Bolshevism" — a French version — is the result of hallucination or manipulation. A false danger embodied by a fictional enemy! Using fears and rumors, this dramatization could be practiced on a credulous anti-fascist public lacking absolute and intellectually respectable (as opposed to populist demagogues) enemies. The legendary story of the conspiracy of the "reds" and the "browns" (who agreed on a shadowy alliance to overthrow "democracy") certainly met an ideological requirement. It undoubtedly "satisfied" a desire to objectify reasons for fear by naming an enemy — a single entity made up of the two great figures of exterminating barbarism in the 20th century: the Bolshevik and the Nazi (or, for those who remain untouched by contemporary historiography: the fascist). The analysis of how this legend that misfired was constructed of the media's fabrication of a pseudo-danger (the press campaign started in the last week of June, 1993 and ended at the end of July; only a few journals imitated *Le Monde*[11]) has yet to be written. In particular, it would help clarify the last attempts to artificially resusitate a petrified "anti-fascism" — a slogan without content — capable of being used in different contexts. That a campaign which calls itself "anti-fascist" is reduced to denouncing as the supreme evil an article in *Krisis*, which is then accused of collaborating (by complicity or by ignorance of the "danger")

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quickly made known in unambiguous letters addressed to the lucid ex-militant Daeninckx (and published in the *Canard Enchaîné*) that the Communist Party severely condemned these "unnatural" liaisons. The "revelations" from the Daeninckx file were first brought out in *Le Pli*, No. 318 (June 14, 1992) — it limited the "national-communist" danger to the Eastern bloc countries), then, without the least hesitation, in *Le Monde*, *Libération*, *Le Figaro* and *Globe*, which for a few weeks agreed on the Franco-French interpretation put forward by the *Canard Enchaîné* (June 23, 1993). See especially O. Biffaud and E. Plenel, "La Tentation National-Communiste," in *Le Monde* (June 26, 1993), p. 1 and 12. This is how the title of the article is explained: "In France and Russia, former Stalin supporters and intellectuals from the far Right dream of a red and brown 'third way'." (p. 1). The publications in this file all present the same picture: they think they can witness world history in the making through a socio-centric keyhole. But world history is not affected by a meeting between Cohen and Benoist! Walter Laqueur describes the recent transformations of Russian neo-nationalism and national-revolutionary syntheses (including the "new right-wing groups") in *Black Hundred: The Rise of Russian Fascism* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).

11. As compared to the campaign started by *Le Monde* in June and July, 1979. See above.

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with the absolute enemy (the disguised "Nazi") is the unwittingly comic demonstration of the inanity of neo-anti-fascist ideology. Self-styled anti-fascists practice a "magical vigilance"[12] against fictional enemies whose main activity is reputedly to "entrap" poor misinformed sops (this model scarcely applies to anything other than Benoist's journal).This is the image diffused by that pathetic press campaign.[13]

Perhaps something should be added that appears all too obvious: in order to find someone to fill the role of the frightening (neo)Nazi, someone besides the barely credible Benoist should have been found. That he might have met with an old or new (or assimilated) Nazi, or that the already dead father of one of his German editors (Grabert Verlag) might have been a Nazi is not enough to establish his identity as a "disguised Nazi"; not enough to pigeon-hole him (he really has not changed; only the masks have). These abusive inferences, which systematically substitute deciphering for critical analysis, have the unfortunate result of forestalling a real debate in France on the foundations of ethno-pluralism and its political practices (current or potential). The provocative and radical nature of the positions Benoist has taken calls for reasoned replies. Rather than trying to dispel political illusions linked to identitarian myths — from a pro-ethnic stance to xenophobic nationalism — or pointing out the perverse effects of communitarian differentialism, some self-styled anti-fascists preferred the easy and intellectually comfortable way out by inventing an easily refutable Benoist who is as diabolical as they want him to be. In fact, the infamous reduction of a redoubtable political and intellectual adversary to

12. The sociologist and polemicist Gaston Bouthoul made an uncompromising critique of a kind of imaginary "pacifism" which stems from "magic vigilance"; see his *Essais de Polémologie* (Paris: Denoël/Gauthier, 1976) p. 135: "By deploring the event, one believes that one has it more or less partially under one's power."

13. See the critical analyses presented in the third part of Pierre-André Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, *op. cit.* In the campaign against the "reds/browns," Benoist was shocking — according to a Left with a phobia for intellectual mixing which wants to remain "pure" and "clean" — because he was an intruder. It is because he enters by intrusion or infraction (by "infiltration," some angrily claim) in the "family" (of the Left) that he is upsetting. It is as if the political foreigner must maintain his pure otherness, keep a good distance, make his ideological "difference" visible. Jean-Paul Honoré made a subtle study of this image of the "intruder" (the "stranger" who steals into the "home" uninvited according to the rules) in the Lepénist rhetoric. See his "Jean-Marie Le Pen et le Front national, (Description et Interprétation d'une Idéologie identitaire)," in *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 465 (April, 1985) especially pp. 1858-1866. As in conspiracy theory, the idea of the intruder can function in very different contexts: conspiracy and "xenophobia" (or cultural/ideological heterophobia) move from Right to Left depending on the polemical context.

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Nazism allows one to annihilate him symbolically without talking to him. The argument is reduced to insults: "Nazi bastard!" It is useless to say any more. This is the zero sum of argumentation — the common practice of some agitators whether on the street or in the salon. It is easy to understand why so many genuine militants in the 1980s refused to take part in actions called anti-fascist or anti-racist. They wanted to distance themselves from a manipulative "anti-fascism" and from an "anti-racism" created by civilian police who more or less knowingly set up a false target.[14]

The myth of a "red/brown" conspiracy, in which Benoist figures as the "brown" *par excellence*, eliminated critical discussion of the way in which the "New Right" constructed its doctrine. Again, the media's exploitation of the conspiracy myth discredited the serious reading of texts, the work of interpretation and the requirements of rational critique. The problem posed by the existence of the "New Right" — personified rightly or wrongly by Benoist — was not raised. It was mythologized by the mechanical use of stereotypes in propaganda which was all too anachronistic and thus ineffective. Far more surprising is that so many good, "cultivated" people are so credulous in the face of so much rhetorical poverty. But perhaps the desire to have such awful enemies who are known and recognizable ("communists," "Nazis") is more powerful than the desire to know and understand.

That Benoist can be considered a turncoat because of his many changes of position and argumentative styles is not in doubt. The claims of some of his former friends who no longer recognize him "as one of our own" — as right-wing, part of the "authentic" Right — is additional proof. But Benoist is a strange turncoat. On the one hand, having broken with his "natural" public — on the Right — by confusing and even shocking them,[15] and with his original ideological and political

14. See Pierre-André Taguieff, "L'Antiracisme en Crise: Éléments d'une Critique Réformiste," in M. Wievorka, Ed., *Racisme et Modernité* (Paris, 1993), pp. 371. Benoist was in charge of an art history edition at Grabert Press, a German publishing house (Tübingen) with a nationalist orientation where many of his books were translated. After the 1993 campaign, he was relieved of his functions by this publisher, who is very well known for his "revisionist" reputation. The "cultural strategy" was singularly imprudent.

15. The journal *Krisis* continually loses those among its first subscribers who, being closer in spirit to the national or nationalistic Right, no longer identify with it. In September 1993, we took a look at some of the mail received by the editorial board at *Krisis*, which contained the replies of some late subscribers to subscription notices. The non-renewal forms are often accompanied by violent diatribes based on two main themes: *Krisis*' turn to the Left and its waffling (the word is not used but the idea is frequently expressed). Some letters especially complain about *Krisis*' "political waffling,"

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milieu, he nonetheless did not find a public or a home in an intellectual community on the Left. (In response to our questions about *Krisis*, a number of university professors and "legitimate" intellectuals replied that they thought it was a journal of high standing but they asked us not to divulge their names. At this point it is useless to question the existence of "intellectual terrorism" in France during the 1980s since its existence is proved by the self-censorship of the most liberated minds.) On the other hand, and especially, having left the right-wing terrain — or at least the duly delineated right-wing arena — Benoist did not migrate to the Left. The fact that he wants to talk to left-wing intellectuals is enough to show that he continues to define himself in terms of his difference with the Left — even if it is anti-capitalist and anti-American — and that he continues to present himself by opposing himself to the Left (as if, confronted with the factual Right which has adapted itself to the prevailing disorder, desertion, indifference or disdain should be practiced). The (real) Left remains his legitimate adversary, the only one deserving of the name.

This position of unstable, undetermined turncoat is very uncomfortable in France, where the categories of Left and Right still play a symbolic role on the intellectual scene. In this paradoxical situation, there is an obviously tragic element arising from conflicting values. Benoist's refusal to join the National Front as it began to rise in 1984-5 — even though people close to him took that step without hesitation (Jean-Claude Bardet, Pierre Vial, etc.) — isolated him within his own generation of militants descended from *Jeune Nation* or from the *Europe Action* network. Similarly, he ran the risk of being called a "traitor" by the orthodox members of the National Front. In short, and to take some distance from his reputation as an able strategist (a professional "entrapper"),

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which results in the "demoralization" or "demobilization" of its readers. For example, we could quote some extracts of a letter in which a former subscriber describes the reasons why he does not want to resubscribe: "*Krisis* is not the journal I was looking for. 1. It pisses me off. 2. I find it dangerous because it is demoralizing and demobilizing. I am not looking for a journal filled with academic debates. I am looking for a journal of political struggle. That is, which denounces an adversary in public and polemicizes to bring him down. By adversary, I mean enemy, and a public enemy, an enemy of the people. I hoped to find in *Krisis* a political goal close to my own. I was wrong. I will have nothing to do with a journal that opens its [...] [illegible: *"lignes"*? in the sense of columns] to everyone. I do not want to give money to a journal in order to allow a J. F. Kahn [sic] or a [...] to present their propaganda there. It is for the same reason that I did not resubscribe to *Éléments*, which floats with the same confused concern in the same political haze." (This undated letter contains the name and address of the reader which must, of course, remain confidential).

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one will note that his radical critique of economic liberalism, of para-religious morality and nationalism *per se* (independent of its xenophobic consequences) gave him the reputation of being a "communist" or a crypto-leftist both in the far Right and in the "respectable" Right.

Benoist quickly turns from "brown" to "red": for the prevailing centro-centrism, all "extremisms" are the same. But at the end of the 1980s his atypical position attracted a new public in which the new generation of GRECE — itself atypical and transversal — was recruited. It is very significant that *Métapo*, the monthly magazine "for a new European culture," was created in 1989 by the *Nouvelle Droite Jeunesse* (NDJ) and edited by Charles Champetier, who would be entrusted with the newly formulated *Éléments* (beginning with number 41) in 1991: *Éléments* "for a European culture" (no longer "for European civilization"), the self-proclaimed "New Culture" replacing that of the "New Right" (*Métapo* folded in the summer of 1990).[16]

At the same time, the journal *Krisis*, which only publishes authors generally unfamiliar with the "New Right" (or with what the "New Right" once was), created its own public which was not that of the authors published. Political and intellectual atypicality is also a means for transforming the audience, a means of reselecting publics and redefining alliances or affinities. Whether he consciously wanted this or not, the atypical character of Benoist's views brought about renewal and rejuvenation. It appears this was the intended aim.

Looking over the mail received in the 1980s by *Nouvelle Ecole*, one can see how diverse its readership is and from this one can tell that it crosses over the boundaries between Left and Right. It is quite revealing that in their letters readers who claim to be on the Left readily insist that the journal remain open to contemporary debates. They also insist on the possibility, even the necessity, of a "discussion" or "dialogue" between left-wing intellectuals and intellectuals in the "New Right." In 1982, Jean-Michel Palmier wrote the following to the *Nouvelle Ecole*: "Despite everything that separates us, I have always read the issues of *NE* on the same day I received them because I have a theoretical interest in them and because I wanted to discover at which point in the reading of an article I no longer agreed. . . . Your publication is also remarkable

16. See *Le Lien* (Summer, 1990) p. 6. In January 1994 the editorial board at *Éléments* claimed to have nearly three thousand subscribers for a printing of fifteen thousand (sales to non-subscribers vary between seven and ten thousand). *Nouvelle Ecole* claims to have two thousand subscribers.

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for other reasons. There is an attempt at documentation and constant analysis, rigor, and a concern to make problems known, all of which are worthy of praise. I often regret that the theoretical Left does not have a similar journal . . . . It goes without saying that I do not agree with everything I find in *Nouvelle Ecole* but this is just what interests me: the recognition of theoretical differences, of differences in sensibility . . . . Many of your ideas are interesting and I absolutely refuse to hand them over to you! You are not afraid of ideas and debates . . . . I have often discussed your ideas with friends on the Left and they often seem prepared to abandon an idea because you put it forward. I have the opposite opinion and believe that it is often more stimulating to debate with people who are intelligent but have different ideas than with people who are supposed to be allies but who have no ideas at all. I find that the questions you raise are important from a left-wing point of view and that it is impossible to avoid them. I think it is more intelligent to respond to your theoretical formulations with other such formulations rather than to excommunicate you and brand you as an anathema. I have often wanted to write many pages of commentary on your articles in order to criticize, argue and discuss them. But I know that in this area, silence is the rule."[17]

This letter provides a good description of the current method of demonizing the "ideas" of the "New Right." These "ideas" are not considered in themselves and do not become the object of a discussion following rational rules. They are rejected from the start as emanating from a subject, individual (Benoist) or collective (GRECE) which already has been submitted to a *reductio ad hitlerum* by insinuation (like the following: "Hitler was anti-liberal; Benoist is anti-liberal; and so on"). This letter also shows the extraordinary intellectual degeneration which affects the Left in France: terrorised by the idea of verbal contact which is needed for a debate, they more often prefer to avoid discussion and to sacrifice argumentative intelligence. It seems there are two main reasons for this paralyzing fear of controversy. First, the fear of inquisitors in the Stalinist tradition (which has survived historical Stalinism) who would excommunicate them ideologically, the desire to avoid any polemical amalgamation at all costs (this is often expressed in a sophism like "to debate with the adversary is to legitimize him and run the risk of being attracted to his theses") the effect of which is to marginalize, even to criminalize, the one victimized by it. Next there is

17. *Nouvelle Ecole*, No. 39 (Fall, 1982) pp. 137 and 139.

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the fear of contact, of the contiguity implied by any discussion, polemical or not. In this panic avoidance of the adversary one can recognize the imaginary idea of dirtying oneself based on the fear of a contagious or indelible mark or infectious germ. One can also recognize the terror of being contaminated by simple verbal contact even at a distance. Apart from these two powerful motivations, the partisans of non-dialogue manifest their lack of assurance by their non-participation — they betray their laziness. The refusal to debate with real adversaries (this should go without saying) is the alibi shared by intellectual mediocrity (which is self-conscious) and simple laziness. But the basest motivations like to dress themselves up in virtuous motives and respectable reasons.

In 1985, Edgar Morin wrote to *Nouvelle Ecole* to state his belief in the principle of free debate, which he immediately put into practice: "*Nouvelle Ecole* interests me a lot. In particular I appreciate the concerns of the German thinkers you write about (who are unknown or not well known here), as well as the bibliographical rigor. As you know, I am among those who have never turned you into scapegoats! Dialogue is therefore as possible as polemics. This certainly does not preclude major and fundamental differences.[18] But the litany of denunciations of the "confusion of ideas" has since been substituted for critical analysis and an "uncompromising dialogue." The virtuous condemnation of the Right's and Left's ideological "*chassé-croisés*," which have resulted in a dangerous "ambiguity," has eliminated any reflection on the intellectual evolution of the participants by serving to justify the absence of a serious investigation into the changes in their positions and political alliances. From this results those appeals to "vigilance," cast in a petrified (neo)anti-fascist language and put forward by minds that are small or blind and always lazy.

Pseudo-militant parroting did not end at the beginning of the 1990s and commemorative anti-fascism still feeds a catastrophic imagination with no foothold in historical reality. Comfortably ensconced in positions of cultural power, a nominal Left has made a speciality of this vain babbling about "vigilance, as if praise of the purity of "ideas" could replace the act of thinking itself and compensate for political inaction or transfigure lack of engagement. It is enough to read such a

18. *Ibid.*, No. 42 (Summer, 1985) p. 135. In 1970 Norbert Elias wrote: "I took great pleasure in acquainting myself with the articles that have appeared in *Nouvelle Ecole*. Some of them also cross paths with my own work and I found them very stimulating. The very informative character of the bibliographies published should also be emphasized." This letter was quoted in *Nouvelle Ecole*, No. 34 (Fall, 1979) p. 11.

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journalist in *Le Monde*. Ordinarily he specializes in book reviews, but he knows how to lend his pen when "great causes" — culturally sublimated by the added presence of prestigious names (Nobel prize *oblige*) — are at stake. In an article entitled "La Confusion des Idées,"[19] the journalist Roger-Pol Droit treats Benoist and the intellectuals suspected of "complicity" in the same way he treated Guy Debord five years earlier: he stigmatizes these dangerous thinkers who "cover their tracks" and therefore (to add to the mixed metaphors) "fog " the minds of honest people. The old adage ("My children, trust your grandmother, everything is going to the dogs . . .") takes on a new significance which is easy to parody: "My children, everything is going to the dogs, there are no more guideposts." For the surveyors and the spies, the catastrophe is at hand: how could Guy Debord be described as being "on the Left"? How could Benoist be "on the Right"? When the boundary between Right and Left is obscured, things become "foggy": this is the idea that enlightens the journalist's politico-philosophical analysis. In July 1988 he wrote that Debord "has become a master of the art of covering his tracks"[20] : for example, he "publicly took Third World and anti-capitalist positions, refused all labels, including those of Left and Right."[21] To be "vigilant" is to spy, decipher, track and uncover. The intellectual turns into a tracker of positions which are not distinct enough, ideas which are deplorably impure and politically impertinent.

Mr. Droit's critical analysis and his combative remarks go no further: the "sleuth" journalist is satisfied with denouncing this "confusion of ideas" as "a major political danger" (p. 9). Masquerading as an argument against the "New Right," Mr. Droit presents to his supposedly naive (and stupid) readers a series of empty formulas in an authoritative tone: "There are . . . dangerous tendencies in our intellectual life (p. 1), "old dangers lurk behind new situations." (p. 9). To this is added the usual polemical mixture of labelling as "far Right" — the adversary one wants to discredit (in this case the "New Right," a label which is carefully

19. *Le Monde* (July 13, 1993) p. 1 and p. 9.

20. Roger Pol-Droit, in *Le Monde* (July 22, 1988); quoted by Guy Debord, *"Cette Mauvaise Réputation . . ."* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993) p. 26. Mr. Droit is not only interested in the "art of covering tracks" but also in the use of pseudonyms: according to the journalist-sleuth, Debord is supposed to have "disseminated a good number of texts under various pseudonyms which have not all been identified." Before he deals with "this big conspirator" in his own way, the accused Debord is content to explain: "I have never published anything under a pseudonym" (*op. cit.*, p. 26).

21. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

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avoided) and of repeating that the worst is yet to come — the current way of dramatizing things (the "major political danger" whose vagueness guarantees its effect). Here is a summary of the warning: "in debates and dialogues with some left-wing intellectuals, part of the far Right" (read: the "New Right") is secretly plotting to "cover its tracks in the realm of ideas." This certainly only exacerbates or increases in a disturbing way the terrible "confusion of ideas," arousing "old dangers" and representing "a major political danger."

The Manichean simplicity and conceptual poverty of such an "analysis," repeated as a litany over works which do not have the journalist-procuror's support,[22] should not obscure its simple function: denunciation and the appeal to "the tradition of vigilance" have the aim of prohibiting a confrontation of "ideas" by calling into question a certain number of intellectuals forever excluded from the legitimate space of debate. The "vigilance" of the anti-fascist tradition is called into play by a discriminating will and placed in the service of a project of segregating "good" from "bad" intellectuals. To avoid the "confusion of ideas" — a repulsive myth in anti-fascist rhetoric — honest people, readers of honest daily newspapers, are called on to debate only with respectable interlocutors pre-selected by media authorities. Through its "anti-fogging" activity, journalistic pseudo-fascism preaches the advent of a society based on discrimination and the segregation of citizens who are candidates for the "debate of ideas." Self-styled "vigilance" is a machine that creates pariahs from the web of its suspicions. Confronted with those who hunt out the "confusion of ideas," who censor public debates, who denounce heterodox thought, intellectual resistance begins with the phrase Lucien Febvre liked to quote: "*oportet haereses esse*" ("we need heretics").[23] These heretics should not be treated as "undesirables," as dialogical untouchables to be execrated or expelled from culturally legitimate areas.

Fourteen years after "the summer of the New Right," mobilizing clichés in a program of mental hygiene was still a very effective media ploy — the manifestations of which are visible in any campaign against

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22. However, see Roger-Pol Droit, "Les Ambiguïtés de Gassendi," in *Le Monde* (December 11, 1992) pp. 37 and 40. In this variant of the singular interpretive model, one finds a pairing of "ambiguities" (which might be "interesting") and of "false analogies": the "two faces," of course, of "this Janus" . . . One learns that "ambiguities, which are always disturbing in contemporaries, are sometimes "interesting" in non-contemporaries.

23. Quoted in Elisabeth Roudinesco and Peter Schöttler, "Lucien Febvre meets Jacques Lacan, Paris 1937," in *Genèses*, No. 13 (Fall, 1993) p. 150.

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"dangerous ideas." It should be recalled that in 1980 Annie Kriegal declared that "the efficacity of any appeal to 'vigilance' " was "assured." This ideological "efficacy" was waning until July 1993 when, as Eastern Europe continued to work through its convulsive flight from communism and violent xenophobic confrontations occurred in most Western European nations, some "anti-fascist" intellectuals thought it wise to call once again for "vigilance"[24] in order to fight against "the far Right's current strategy of legitimation," which essentially would consist in "a large seduction campaign aimed at democrats and intellectuals, some of whom are known for being on the Left." In France, this strategic model only applies to the journal *Krisis*, edited by Benoist, which generally has only published authors classified as left-wing (with a few exceptions). Those who signed the "call to vigilance" plan to construct "a vigilant Europe," not by fighting against xenophobic nationalism and identitarian populism which legitimate practices of "ethnic cleansing" (on a large or small scale), but "by collecting and circulating as widely as possible all information useful for understanding the networks of the far Right and their intellectual allies (publishing houses, newspapers, universities) and by agreeing to "reject any collaboration with journals, collective works, radio or television programs, colloquia organised or directed by people whose links with the far Right have been confirmed".

The courage needed for this has reasonable limits. And the clarity demanded is also not excessive. In fact, this way of characterizing the "far Right" by its cultural strategies of seducing the adversary and of self-legitimation shows that it is the "New Right" which is targeted; and the "ideologues from the far Right" who "for some time now have tried to make people believe that they have changed" are reduced to the person of Benoist (accompanied, if need be, by his Italian homologue Marco Tarchi, who himself also has become more suspect since he opened his journals to the intellectual Left). Problem of labels: the "far Right" is the "New Right" for those who know how to decode. This means that the "anti-fascist" public (sensitive to anti-fascist ideas) is being given the exalted task of constructing a "vigilant Europe" by putting a *cordon sanitaire* around a journal like *Krisis* (600 subscribers) and those it has "entrapped" who have not repented! By contrast, the leaders of the National Front never have tried to "force people to believe they have changed" and never invited Left intellectuals to write in

24. See *Le Monde* (July 13, 1993) p. 8.

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their publications: this is how the "far Right" (which disseminates and legitimates xenophobic ideas in France) really functions. The political analysis on which the "appeal to vigilance" is based is quite simply false: the "far Right" is by no means deploying a "legitimation strategy" which "profits from the multiplication of debate and dialogue": it does not attempt to seduce the intellectual left and it does not call for dialogue or debate. But the appeal did not have to be based on truth to ensure its efficacy . . .

To get at the reality of these political and intellectual evolutions, the picture has to be reversed. Benoist did "change" after the mid-1960s, whereas many of his detractors did not, either in their methods or in their beliefs. But meanwhile the state of France and of Europe also has changed. This allows an evaluation of the lack of clarity in a ranting and lazy (neo)anti-fascism which can barely see dangers arising in Europe today other than those connected with "debate" and "dialogue" with "New Right" intellectuals in France or Italy. Lost to serious anti-racism, the soft nationalization of xenophobia — especially in France — still continues without disturbing very many people, and the European utopia becomes political at the same speed as xenophobic violence becomes the order of the day in both East and West. In their silence on these matters, the preachers and professors of vigilance do not seem to care. Intellectual Stalinism leads a hard life.

In principle, in order for a democratic citizenry to exist, "freedom of speech and of writing" must not be broached. Ordinarily debate is the rule — from dialogue to ideological struggle — and the refusal to do so is an exception. If it is not, nothing prevents an individual from systematically refusing to speak to any other individual who disagrees with him. Demonstration by absurdity — the indefinite extension of the principle of non-debate with adversaries — destroys something essential to humanity, which consists precisely in surmounting conflicts through dialogue. Palmier's and Morin's previously mentioned letters have the notable merit of reminding the most sectarian intellectual Left in the world that the goal of a dialogical confrontation (of whatever type) is to allow interlocutors to agree on the reasons why they disagree. Dialogue is not essentially agreement; it is not intended to eliminate disagreements. The "polytheism of values" is insurmountable.

This article discusses the "ideas" of the "New Right" without complicity but without demonizing them — as far as it is possible — on the basis of a dialogical principle which presupposes something like an argumentative good will — a mixture of good faith and philological probity.

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Whatever our divergences, disagreements or conflicts with Benoist's "ideas," we have the duty to consider them, to submit them to critical examination and, if necessary, to reject them. In so doing, we know also that we are violating the implicit rule of a common practice which essentially consists in condemning before any critical examination, then in rejecting without discussion. In a society whose normative watchword is the "struggle against exclusion," the fact that an "intellectual" who respects the rules of dialogue is excluded from legitimate dialogue is at the very least a paradox which, seen from far away, might appear as a scandal, at least from the standpoint of a cultural or intellectual liberalism which at one and the same time presupposes a state based on modern law and the exercise of free critical discussion. Bernard Lewis provides this simple definition, which emphasises the opposition between liberal and authoritarian: "By liberal, I mean respectful of individual liberty and human rights; the antonym of liberal is not conservative but authoritarian."[25]

In his interventions concerning the "New Right" in July and August 1973 and at the end of his *Mémoires*, Raymond Aron raised the problem of the attitude to take to the "New Right." For example, to fight against Benoist's ideas (his anti-egalitarianism, his anti-Americanism, his anti-liberalism, his neo-paganism), should one call on judges to prohibit the circulation of his texts? Should one therefore practice legal anti-racism to censor Benoist's work? In the press campaigns during the summers of 1979 and 1993, many of the "New Right's" accusers described it to competent authorities as contravening the "anti-racist" law of July 1, 1972 by assimilating it to Nazism in one way or another.[26]

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25. Bernard Lewis, "Islam et Démocratie," in *Notes de la Fondation Saint-Simon* (June, 1993), No. 54, p. 7.

26. See, for example, René Monzat, "Le Rituel SS de la Nouvelle Droite," in *Le Monde* (July 3, 1993) p. 12. (GRECE advocates the use of a symbolic object — the "Tower of Jul" — to celebrate Christmas. But this candlestick, which is used especially in Scandinavian countries, was also used by the SS. So GRECE is practising an "SS ritual." This reasoning could be repeated for all pagan symbols adopted by the Nazis. It can by no means serve as a proof as long as other links have not been established). The journalist René Monzat (pseudonym), schooled in Trotskyst circles, published *Enquêtes sur la Droite Extrême* (Paris: Le Monde/Editions, 1992) in which, by a classical game of mirrors, denouncing the demonized adversary's conspiracy theory itself functions in a conspiratorial way. Caught up in the passion of unmasking and revealing secrets, of forcing open shadowy areas, the militant journalist summarizes his opinion: "These investigations reveal a shadowy zone, teeming with life, at the junction of the secret services, of far Right groups and the "republican" parties." He adds: "In the third part of the book, devoted to ideologies, we dismantle the strategies of dissimulation . . . ; of infiltration . . . ; of recuperation" (p. 11). This policeman's vision of what the "investigator"

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From this point of view, based on the "Nazification" of GRECE, it is not necessary to discuss its ideas, and certainly not to engage in discussion with its representatives. One need only stigmatize, denounce, condemn, in order to make censorship acceptable, even desirable. In 1979 and 1983, Raymond Aron examined the views of the partisans of ideological censorship and showed that it is incompatible with a liberal vision, with the values and norms of liberalism. For the one and only problem is to know how to resist — in a way that is not imaginary — the modern form of barbarism: totalitarianism. Or again: how not to play the game of totalitarian thought with the most honorable anti-racist or anti-fascist intentions. In 1979 the philosopher and sociologist found a criterion for intellectual liberalism: "No conception of the world, be it monotheist or not, can defend as such the individual or society against totalitarianism. The antidote for totalitarianism is to refuse to

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calls "ideologies" reveals the general orientation of his "investigations" (which should be distinguished from the factual information they give). "Informers" continue to fascinate some journalists, who end up being taken in by them. It is well known that "revelations" are keenly sought after by the media, easily satisfied by the literature of visionaries concerning the "international neo-Nazi conspiracy," the immanence of a "Fourth Reich" or the rampant threat of a two-headed "national-communist," "national-bolshevik" dictatorship. See, for example, Antoinette Bernard and Antoine Rigal, "Ils sont partout," (dossier: "Les Liaisons Dangereuses"), in *Ras l'Front*, No. 15 (September-October, 1993). Philippe Videlier, "A Peine Masqués, s'avancent les Falsificateurs du Passé," in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, No. 478, (January, 1994) pp. 16-17. In this last article, which has a surprisingly violent polemic, conspiracy theory (strategic calculations in the shadows . . .) and the polemical stereotype of the "masked enemy" provide the basis for denouncing demonized, criminalized or pathologized figures. Consider the following: "These mercenaries are not afraid of confusing styles: *gangrene* broke out among a group of *'déclassés'* and it then found a place for its natural expansion in the far Right" (p. 17: italics added). After pathologization and criminalization, conspiracy theory and demonization: "The old calculating mole . . . marks one small victory after the other and its people are strategically located: at the right hand of the devil" (*Ibid.*). The conspiracy view of these left-wing "costoniens" is clarified when it is compared to that of orthodox costoniens: the mental structures are the same, only chance situates them on the Right or the Left, in the "anti-fascist" camp or the other one. See, e.g., Jean Madiran, "Le B'nai B'rith et l'Exclusion du Front National," in *Présent*, No. 2975, (December 15, 1993) p. 3; "Mystères et Secrets du B'nai B'rith: Comment une Organisation Maçonnique Juive a été Pénétré par les Rouages de l'État Français," (anonymous author), in *National Hebdo*, No. 492, (December 23-December 29, 1993) p. 6. To see the functional homologies one need only substitute "GRECE" for "B'nai B'rith" and "para-Masonic neo-Nazi organization" for "Jewish Masonic organization." On the subject of this type of pamphlet based on a conspiracy theory, see Pierre-André Taguieff, "Mobilisation National-populiste en France: Vote Xénophobe et Nouvel Antisémitisme Politique," in *Lignes*, No. 9 (March, 1990), pp. 91-136; and "Nationalisme et Réactions Fondamentalistes en France . . . ," in *Vingtième Siècle*, No. 25 (January-March, 1990), pp. 49-73.

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arrogate to oneself or to give to others the monopoly over legitimate speech."[27]

The demand for ideological censorship is ambiguous; it is not in itself the expression of a totalitarian vision but it can become one. It can drift toward the totalitarian idea of a society with a single way of thinking, bringing to fruition the desire for an orthodoxy without limits. Like ideas, words can kill: this is the major argument of the partisans of ideological censorship who seek an anti-racist/anti-fascist corrective. But ideas and words do not kill in and of themselves, by their substantive symbolic power: they can kill only in a certain context accompanied by certain practices, by certain uses made of them. It follows that there should be less concern with "dangerous ideas" than with the dangerous exploitation of certain ideas, of all ideas which, as we know, can be perverted. Consequently, censoring words and ideas is only a poor substitute for an anti-totalitarian program of action. Censorship does not eliminate, does not destroy; it prohibits some ways of circulating messages, it displaces communication and makes way for the inevitable return of the "repressed." This is why one can only attempt to chose the path of lesser evil which, in a democratic age, presupposes confidence in debate and rationality as well as the resolve to avoid falling into a huge paradox: wanting to fight totalitarian tendencies with the instruments of a totalitarian politics which wants to establish a society without opponents or "people who think the wrong way," without a space for free debate. In 1983, Aron dealt with this problem directly in the "case" of Benoist: "Some Jews and official organizations of the Jewish community readily denounce Benoist's "New Right" by imputing to it a penchant for National Socialism. At the same time, they sometimes ask authorities to silence it on the pretext that it falls under the law condemning hate literature. Jews who demand censorship are wrong. Is Benoist essentially anti-Semitic? I do not know and I do not much care. I have found no proof of this in the texts which have appeared in the last few years. He defends himself against this accusation: in the name of the enriching diversity of cultures, he encourages the survival of regional cultures; why not the safeguarding of Jewish particularities? In any case, Benoist is too well informed not to understand that the Nazis have forever discredited themselves by the gas chambers. . . . The day after the assassination on the rue Copernic, a journalist from Antenne 2 interviewed me about the causes and the

27. Raymond Aron, "La Nouvelle Droite," in *L'Express* (July 21, 1979) p. 49.

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responsibilities for this event. He tried to draw me into a discussion about the intellectuals on the New Right. I answered abruptly that I would not take part in this kind of amalgamation. Those who hate Benoist's ideas should combat them with ideas, not with sticks or gas. I have said that ideas kill, but the real beauty and fragility of liberalism is that it does not smother voices, even if they are dangerous."[28]

If one believes that the "New Right" is dangerous, reasons should be given without having recourse to polemical amalgamations. Its ideas should be criticized, its themes and references analyzed, its doctrines dismantled, its unfounded beliefs refuted. For the time being the "New Right" is not mobilizing the masses and is not linked to the groups which expressly threaten democratic institutions. We can adopt Aron's remark during the 1979 campaign against the "New Right": "If it represents a danger, and I have no reason to believe it does, the response to it should be an intellectual one"[29]

Through the dialectics of debate, disagreements emerge, underlying motivations are clarified, differends are discovered — possibly even how they were constructed — and finally limits are set out, borders are crossed and others are seen as indefensible or intolerable. Outside the space opened by critical discussion in controlled debates there is nothing but denunciations based on *a priori* condemnation of absolute enemies, absolutely detestable or despicable. There is nothing left but the virtuous pose of a lazy or mediocre conformist making virtue of necessity (refusing to speak to enemies, even to read their works). These are the classical police methods of disqualifying political enemies or rebellious minds. This pairing of police inquisition with ideological virtue is a fair characterization of the pseudo-anti-fascist spirit in which a number of articles or books on the "New Right" have been written. To break with this denunciating spirit is to refuse to allow the rumors or prohibitions hurled by cliques, acting as ideological police and benefiting from positions of power in the media, to replace the free confrontation of themes, ideas and arguments. The practice of democracy depends on this; it presupposes that counter-forces prevent any powerful network from monopolizing legitimate speech in the name of Goodness (which is usually reduced to a "defence of democracy" the vagueness of which

28. Raymond Aron, *Mémoires*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Presses-Pocket, 1985), p. 984. In 1971, Aron wrote: "At a time and in a city, Paris, where the conformism of a pseudo-conformism reigns, *Nouvelle Ecole* has the courage to violate taboos and put forward difficult problems in an open-minded way. Whether I agree or not, I value its procedure." From a letter quoted in *Nouvelle Ecole*, No. 34 (Fall, 1979), p. 13.

29. Raymond Aron, "La Nouvelle Droite," in *L'Express*, *op. cit.*

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lends itself to all kinds of uses). The practice of democracy presupposes that citizens are motivated by a two-fold desire for "instruction" and discussion. Democracy is neither the absolute rule of the ideas of the majority nor the closing in on itself of the "sovereignty of the people." The condition of its possibility is the opening up of space for a discussion which would ideally regulate itself, which tries to do without external authorities on truth or justice whether they present and legitimate themselves as pre-existing (tradition) or superior (revelation) — even as the ideas of the majority.

The process of secularization has never been completed; the modern rationalization of attitudes and behaviors is more an ideal than a social reality. The desire for transcendence is appeased precisely by investing cracks in the disenchanted world, inhabiting empty spaces in the process of rationalization. The dominant form of political neo-transcendence takes the form of idealizing "mass" conformity, which is supported in the work of legitimation that "organic" intellectuals — those entrepreneurs of orthodox visions — provide. Furthermore, the media's symbolic power now transforms dominant ideas into absolute facts which feed the soft tyranny of mediated opinion. The emergence of such a limitless orthodoxy, precluding the classical counter-force of critical examination, poses a dilemma insofar as a pluralist democracy excludes the rule of any orthodoxy. An exclusionary orthodoxy is taking shape in contemporary pluralist societies on the basis of a certain number of symbolic materials whose logical incompatibility does not rule out their efficacious combination: the defence of "human rights" and the respect for the "right to difference," the categorical imperative of the "struggle against exclusion" (discrimination, stigmatization, segregation) and the "anti-racist" practice of symbolically excluding "racists" (defined as those who exclude), the defence of "victims" or the "poor," and the practice of the "duty to intervene," which has changed from being emergency humanitarian aid into the military goal of "pacification," the consensual cult of the borderless market and the appeal to respect the boundaries between Right and Left. All these ideals and practices are heading towards an ideological and political "alignment": a tendency towards monodoxy in the media of liberal democracies and the imposition of a moral, legal or political order on nations which resist "globalization." The general tendency is toward cultural homogenization and legal and political uniformity; these are required in order to bring about a post-national market. The most obvious paradox can be seen in the fact that the move toward homogeneous uniformity born in pluralist

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democracies ends up being universalized either by humanitarian moralizing or military violence. The unadmitted ideal of a world without heretics, dissidents, opponents — in short, without heterodox thinkers — has made progress in people's thinking and customs.

Globalization runs the risk of bringing about the elimination of freedom of thought by slowly disqualifying, through suspicion of heterodoxy, ideas which do not agree with media standards. In this dynamic process one can restore the symbolic rituals of exclusion aimed at the "New Right" as well as at intellectuals who agree to debate or argue with some of its representatives. This is really the emerging form of a peculiarly French "political correctness" whose national specificity has a strong Stalinist flavor. It is considered politically correct to refuse to debate with some categories of intellectual adversaries because they are allegedly "disguised Nazis." To this image of the absolute "disguised" enemy inherited from Stalinist rhetoric is added the polemical amalgamation (which disqualifies absolutely) of the fictional "national-communist." This version has been adapted to prevailing values in amalgamations of the "Hitlerian-Trotskyst" type. A "barbarized" adversary, turned into an enemy of "normal" humanity, is reduced to something identical (here one can see the reversal of a recurring image in the Western fear of Jews: the Jew as "enemy of the human species").[30]

The emergence of the historically real can no longer be seen; it is no longer explored as something new. It is reduced to signs or to indications of a past codified and turned into a repulsive myth: a past peopled with "old devils." Thus it is assumed that the present is in the grip of the past and we simply decipher this echolalaic present to find in it recurrences or resurgences. The search for what is the same is the only search which the cult of memory allows. This anti-racism is commemorative and this anti-fascism is conjury. They are rites of exorcism in which the litany-like "appeal to vigilance" identifies the danger indefinitely to make it exist and conjure it up in a single gesture. Once more "we are entering the future by moving backward," to quote Valéry.[31]

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30. On this kind of extremist assimilation or polemical amalgamation, see Marc Angenot, *La Parole Pamphlétaire* (Paris: Payot, 1982) p. 126; Pierre-André Taguieff, "L'Anti-Racisme en Crise," in Wieviorka, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 366-71. On the paranoid vision of "disguised enemies," which was current in the Moscow trials (1936-38) but did not prevent it from being internalized by its victims (especially the Trotskysts) see Nicolas Werth, *1936-1938: Les Procès de Moscow* (Brussels: Complexe, 1987) particularly p. 127ff. and 145ff. Taguieff, *Les Protocoles de Sion*, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 159ff.

31. Paul Valéry, "Discours de l'Histoire," (July 13, 1932) in *Variété* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), p. 139.

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We have not stopped believing that history is the science of things which repeat themselves, of experiences relived, dangers which reproduce themselves identically and so are easily identifiable. Blind and blinding belief. The "fascist danger" of the thirties, which vigilance committees composed of anti-fascist intellectuals rightly denounced with courage and lucidity shortly after 1933, is part of a past which is gone. Neither "fascism" nor "racism" will do us the favor of returning in such a way that we can recognize them easily. If vigilance was only a game of recognizing something already well-known, then it would only be a question of remembering. Vigilance would be reduced to a social game using reminiscence and identification by recognition, a consoling illusion of an immobile history peopled with events which accord with our expectations or our fears. Magical vigilance: one declares oneself "vigilant" to prevent the return of the "old devils." Double illusion: to know is simply to recognize and action is reduced to naming the threat, to saying that one can readily see its alleged return happening all the time. Our magical vigilance is fed by two absolute convictions: Nazism will never stop coming back; racism will never stop rising. These mythical representations of eternal rebirth and the unending rise of figures of absolute evil are in the very center of our political demonology. Satanic imagery is still alive and one kind of journalism really consists in political exorcism. How could we live without our dear "old devils," without nightmarish companions (long since domesticated) which change faces as fashions take hold of our repulsive myths themselves (from racism to nationalism, from xenophobia to tribalism, from euthanasia to eugenics, from clericalism to integralism)? It is not useless to recall some facts, starting with this one: despite its function of social and psychological "nourishment," the consumption of myths is not an act of cognition. Conjury is not knowledge!

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The New Right in Europe

Mark Wegierski

The European New Right (ENR) presents itself as a contradictory phenomenon. While many of its arguments sound radical and original, they owe a great deal to traditional European thought — especially Catholic organicism. Although the ENR has rejected the far Right, some questionable links remain. Despite this, it may become the ideology of choice for those intellectuals still opposed to capitalism — a possible place for that intellectually-honest part of the Left attempting to come to terms both with the collapse of "really existing socialism" and a triumphant Western consumerist society predicated on managerial-therapeutic capitalism.

The ENR cannot be understood independently of its history. As Marco Tarchi, a leader of the Italian New Right put it: "What we must do today is to illuminate the fundamental novelty of the New Right, to put the emphasis on the term 'new' and no longer on the term 'Right.' Otherwise we will still be clinging to the heritage of the decrepit and worm-eaten currents of thought of the 1950s and 1960s which, in the face of all opposition, are still churning out the same old slogans with their whole perception of reality built around bygone political divisions. The desire to restore chauvinistic nationalisms is part of this archaic way of thinking . . . . It is up to us, to our generation, definitively to surpass these outworn ideas."[1]

The ENR has made a major effort to break with its far Right roots. In this sense, it is misleading to call a tendency strongly opposed both

1. See "The Italian 'Nuova Destra': An Interview with Marco Tarchi, " in *Perspectives*, No. 3 (Winter 1991-92), p. 23.

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to Anglo-American conservatism (with its emphasis on bourgeois individualism, capitalism, and property rights) and traditional Continental conservatism (with its emphasis on monarchy and Church) "right-wing." The conventional notion of "right-wing" in the Anglo-American context is so different from what the ENR represents that it is almost useless when it comes to describing the latter phenomenon.

The ENR came into being in the 1960s to provide a satisfactory analysis of what ails the West and the world, and to identify possible brakes for the ineluctable logic of "progress." It saw as the primary feature of late modernity the tendency to shatter religious, cultural, and national traditions stretching back hundreds or even thousands of years, and to replace them with banal victimologies. *It is explicitly opposed to American hegemony* and, in Britain, it identifies with the Celtic fringe. The ENR claims that England had diverged from the continent in its Calvinism, capitalism and Whiggery, and that America then diverged still further. European intellectual life — Left, Right, and Center, particularly in France — revolves around a knee-jerk anti-Americanism. The ENR is no exception, and has developed a Left-sounding critique of American intervention in Vietnam and around the globe, American cultural imperialism in France, the problems of poverty and homelessness in America, the Calvinistic racism and puritanism of the US, and so forth.[2]

The ENR has not yet worked out a precise genealogy of what it views as the *Anglo-American deviation*, though the outcome of the English Civil War and the later struggles which led to the exclusion of the Stuarts from the English and Scottish thrones have played a large part in determining the Anglo-American trajectory. Along with anti-Americanism, *anti-capitalism* is also central to the ENR. Here "capitalism" is seen as the encroaching system of US-based media/corporate oligarchy: gross materialism and the *homo œconomicus*, or the *homunculus* of Nietzsche's *Last Man*. It also implies the whole burgeoning world of technology and its attempt to manipulate human and physical nature. Through anti-capitalism, the ENR links with the Left and various ecological movements. According to *Perspectives*, a leading ENR organ: "The collapse of communism is not only a political victory for the American New World Order but a moral triumph for the American Way of Life. We can all now look forward to a future of unbridled consumption, in which we will all be equal and free to buy the same things. However, there are those in Europe who still value the rooted diversity of its peoples, and all the

2. See *Éléments*, Nos. 69, 70 and *Perspectives*, No. 4, devoted respectively to the theme: "Le Nouvel Ordre Américaine," "Etats-Unis: Danger!" and "Beware the USA!"

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qualities which make us more than mere units of consumption. These people actually oppose the liberal-capitalist system. They want an organically rooted society instead of more Disneylands, and they flout accepted political convention by talking about transcending the old notions of Left and Right in a new synthesis of radical thought. They are active in fields of culture and metapolitics, waging a war of ideas. They seek a European renaissance. This attachment to identity is an inconvenience to the multinationals, an insult to Ronald McDonald and a direct attack on Coca-Colonization."[3]

This anti-capitalism is connected with the ENR's opposition to Calvinism — something it shares with nearly all varieties of Catholic-derived Continental right-wing thought — but also with its *opposition to Judeo-Christianity*. This radical, anti-traditional aspect of the ENR is also shared by the anti-clerical Left and Nazism. The ENR engages in biting anti-clerical polemics of an almost Voltairean style. It sees the roots of totalitarianism and persecution in European history as a result of Judeo-Christian values, notably the Old Testament, with its tales of ferocity and retribution. "The body count amassed by the servants of the God of love . . . is now incalculable . . . Had Nicolae Ceaucescu lived a few hundred years ago he would have made a not untypical prince of the Church — on frequent precedent, a saint . . . . The concept of totalitarianism, the evil seed of the Inquisition, Auschwitz and the Gulag, was brought to Europe and forced on it by the followers of Jesus Christ. . . ."[4]

A group calling itself the "*Organisation de Défense Juive*" violently protested against GRECE on December 9, 1979, claiming that opposition to "Judeo-Christian totalitarianism" was disguised anti-Semitism. (They seemed to forget that the criticism of Christianity as the seed of Auschwitz is common among Jewish and Left historians). GRECE's response to these accusations was unequivocal: "Jewish monotheism became truly totalitarian only when it ceased to be Jewish and claimed to submit people who held different religious views to the law of a single God . . . . The children of Athens and of Jerusalem, the pagan and Jewish victims of religious intolerance, suffered as a result of Christian persecutions."[5] However, this condemnation of Christianity and exculpation of Judaism is disingenuous. The ENR stresses the Near Eastern, alien origins of

3. Insert to *Perspectives*, No. 3 (Winter 1991-92).
4. *The Scorpion*, No. 13 (Winter 1989-90), p. 52
5. See Michalina Vaughan, "Nouvelle Droite: Cultural Power and Political Influence," in David S. Bell, ed., *Contemporary French Politics* (London & Canberra: Groom Helm, 1982), p. 63.

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Christianity, implying that the Jews are also aliens in Europe. The fact that such views were prominent in Nazism contributes to the ENR's ostracism from mainstream politics.

Although there is a long tradition of criticism of Judeo-Christianity from Voltaire to Nietzsche, the ENR creates problems for traditional conservatives. It is ironic to find laudatory articles on Joseph de Maistre and Nietzsche within a few pages of each other in *Éléments*.[6] For a school ostensibly critical of modernity and its "disenchantment of the world," these vitriolic attacks against traditional religion may be counterproductive. Clearly not all Christians are like Ceaucescu. If the problem of late modernity is the disappearance of all rooted, truly meaningful, and relatively stable belief-systems, then even from the ENR standpoint *any* traditional religion, even Christianity, must be better than no religion at all.

The ENR also takes its anti-Christianism further by recycling the most traditional European religion: *paganism*. This is quite a trick. It may even be dishonest: a ducking of the issue of the ENR's *atheism* (a more difficult position to hold for alleged "restorers of the sacred"). What can this mean, thousands of years after paganism has disappeared? This embrace of paganism may be an attempt to re-evaluate the relation between humanity and nature along Heideggerian lines, while vindicating particularity and locality.

For the ENR the Golden Age is the *primordial Indo-European past*. This is lifted straight out of German Romanticism and 19th century anthropology. The immediate suspicion is that "Indo-European" is simply a polite substitution for "Aryan." Allegedly, in this pagan, tribal Indo-European paradise, there were no fratricidal wars between different branches of European peoples, and every member of the tribe lived a meaningful life in relative economic prosperity. The spatial and temporal boundaries of this world are not precisely drawn — it could include ancient India, Greece, Germanic tribal life at the time of Tacitus, Slavic tribal life around the 9th century A.D., and so forth.[7] The ethnographical work of Georges Dumézil, which identified the so-called "trifunctionality" of the Indo-European priest, warrior, and farmer, is often cited. This romanticized past is important because many of the ENR referents, such as paganism, naturalism, particularism, a sort of feminism, and ecology, are predicated on it.

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6. *Éléments*, No. 79 (January 1994), pp. 25-28.
7. See in particular the "Heritage" section of Alain de Benoist's *Vu de droite* (Paris: Copernic, 1977).

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This paganism fits well with Alain de Benoist's *"spherical" concept of time*, according to which "(everything is in the instant) . . . the past and future consitute *dimensions present in every actual moment*. . . . The present actualizes all past moments and prefigures all future ones. To accept the present by joyously assuming the instant is to be able to enjoy *all* instants *at the same time*. Past, present, and future are three perspectives, *equally actual now*, that are given to every moment of historical becoming . . . [this] delivers to him the possibility of connecting with *tradition*, indeed in a cultural and ethnic sense. Tradition is not the past but is 'beyond time'; it is 'permanent' and 'within us,' and it becomes '*our* tradition' by being reactualized."[8]

Despite such an elaborate metaphysics, this could be interpreted simply as a call for a return to one's ethnic and cultural roots — a staple of traditional conservative thought. At any rate, there may be a contradiction in the ENR's embrace of paganism. Is paganism meant to be a "manly," "heroic" warrior-creed opposing the supposed "weakness" of Christianity (allegedly a masochistic "slave-morality"), or a kind of sentimental nature-worship opposed to a savagely inquisitorial Christianity, with its crusades and witch-burnings?

The ENR's "paganism" entails a *naturalism* towards *mores* and sexuality. Unlike stiff traditionalists, ENR members have a relatively liberated attitude towards sexuality. Thus Benoist had no qualms about giving an interview to *Gaie France*, which features homoerotic images as well as cultural commentary.[9] ENR members have no desire to impose what they consider the patently unnatural moralism of Judeo-Christianity on sexual relations. However, while relatively more tolerant in principle, they still value strong family life, fecundity, and marriage or relations within one's own ethnic group. (Their objection to intraethnic liaisons would be that the mixture of ethnic groups diminishes a sense of identity. In a world where every marriage was mixed, cultural identity would disappear). They also *criticize Anglo-American moralism* and its apparent hypocrisy: ". . . a video depicting a man and woman having sexual intercourse . . . is liable to confiscation by the [British] state. One graphically depicting teenage girls being disembowelled by razor blades affixed to the fingers of a repulsive ghoul, by contrast, tops the rental figures quite lawfully across the land, goes into four editions, each more disgusting and genuinely obscene than the last, and is not

8. Thomas Sheehan, "Myth and Violence: The Fascism of Julius Evola and Alain de Benoist," in *Social Research*, Vol. XLVIII (Spring 1981), pp. 64-65.

9. *The Sting*, No. 12 (Autumn 1992), p. 4.

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indeed the most unpleasant revelling in blood and gore to sit lawfully on the video shops' shelves."[10] In this, they are closer to a worldly Europe than to a puritanical America obsessed with violence. According to the ENR: "Our ancestral Indo-European culture . . . seems to have enjoyed a healthy natural attitude to processes and parts of the body concerned with the bringing forth of new life, the celebration of pair-bonding love, and the perpetuation of the race."[11]

In its desire to create a balanced psychology of sexual relations, the ENR seeks to overcome the liabilities of conventional conservative thought: the perception of conservatives as joyless prudes, and the seemingly ridiculous psychology implied in conventional Christianity. It seeks to address "flesh-and-blood men and women," not saints. Since some of the Left's greatest gains in the last few decades have been made as a result of their championing sexual freedom and liberation, the ENR seeks to offer its own *counter-ethic of sexual joy*. The hope is presumably to nourish persons of the type who can, in Nietzsche's phrase, "make love after reading Hegel." This is also related to the desire for the reconciliation of the intellectual and warrior in one person: the reconciliation of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*.

This naturalism leads the ENR to re-evaluate "the feminine" and reject what it sees as Christianity's denigration of women. The ENR has begun developing a *counter-ethic of feminism* which, while respecting women and "the feminine," rejects the US ideologization of gender by politically-correct feminism. These ideas promise to overcome the poisoned atmosphere of sexual relations and the neo-puritanism of radical feminism. "In pre-Christian Europe, amongst the Celts and the Norse for example, women, without in any way renouncing their femininity or seeking to be *ersatz* men, enjoyed essentially equal rights."[12]

The ENR's naturalism also leads it to defend the supposedly *natural and normative nature of ethnic or kinship links*. Thus the ENR departs from

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10. *The Scorpion*, No. 13 (Winter 1989-90), p. 52.

11. *The Scorpion*, No. 13 (Winter 1989-90), p. 51. Thus, at the end of a long interview, Benoist states: "There are other comforts: the arts, contemplation and, of course, women. I do not have to tell you of all people, *mon cher Michel*, who loathes as much as I do the misogyny so common on the Right, that the pleasures of the flesh are one of the paths to the spirit, and that the best argument which was ever given for justifying the existence of frontiers is the profound joy we feel in crossing them." See *The Scorpion*, No. 10 (August 1986), p. 32. This is a translation of an interview originally published in *Éléments*.

12. *The Scorpion*, No. 13 (Winter 1989-90), p. 51. Another example of the ENR's pagan feminism is Brigid Clarke's "The Black Virgins of Europe," which praises the Cult of the Virgin Mary in Roman Catholicism as a residue of pagan Goddess worship. See *Perspectives*, No. 3 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 25-27.

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traditionalism by emphasizing *the small nations and the historical regions of Europe*, rather than the large and homogenizing nation-states: "The emergence of the idea of nation in the 18th century is a phenomenon arising not from a consciousness of identity, but, on the contrary, from the bourgeoisie's social and political conception of the state."[13] Similarly, ". . . the Europe of the big states . . . is not, and never has been, a natural Europe. It is the product of rival imperialisms, of conquests, of aggressive and violent acts, both military and socio-economic . . . . The real Europe, the natural Europe, is one of numerous small states, numerous national communities, principalities, and free cities which are united and brought together above the level of their differences and divergences by a common civilization, forged over the course of two millennia . . . . It was this natural Europe that the big imperialist states, and their conscripted supporters, destroyed and replaced with their own version. Great Britain, France, Germany and Russia were mainly to blame for this development."[14]

The ultimate goal is *the Europe of a Hundred Flags* — a patchwork quilt of colorful, traditional principalities. The ENR does not emphasize national uniformity — the traditional right-wing position — but *difference*. This is part of the ENR's overall *anti-totalitarian stand*. The emphasis is on philosophical *pluralism*: opposition to the reduction of life to any *one* variable or force (e.g. the class-struggle, economy, nation, or race), in favor of multiplicity and particularity. This is complemented by an *aestheticism*, in the tradition of the interwar German "Conservative Revolution" — a visceral reaction of "high taste" to the vulgarized modern world of "rubbish." ENR publications are filled with finely-rendered reproductions of heroic art from Europe's long history. The focus is on "romantic realism" — though they are not averse to some modernist painters. This is not only a frank celebration of European art, but also a deliberate attempt to vindicate the heroic aspects of life, for European people deadened by consumerism and Americanization.

In contrast to its emphasis on *mythopoeia*, the ENR tends toward what Ferraresi calls its *scientism*: ". . . in a cultural context which privileges science as the highest form of knowledge, one of the stated goals . . . is the propagation of scientific developments which will dissipate the prejudices and 'taboos' of the reigning ideology, i.e., egalitarianism and

13. Ulric Smith, "Nationalism: A Poison," in *Perspectives*, No. 7 (Winter 1993-94), p. 16.

14. Yann Fouéré, "Towards a Natural Europe," in *Perspectives*, No. 5 (Winter 1992-93), p. 18. Originally published in the Breton nationalist journal, *Gwenn ha Du* (August-September 1992).

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democracy. The 'hard new' sciences like anthropology, biology, genetics, ethology, sociobiology, psychology, psychiatry, etc. are thus systematically plundered, and those results are selected that support the notions of heredity, invariance, innateness, the biological determination of social and ethical attitudes . . . . The outcome is a set of savage rules, which are then put forward by right-wing ideologues as 'laws of nature'."[15] This scientistic focus was at one time very prominent, e.g., when the ENR sought to integrate the thought of the Vienna Circle and Bertrand Russell. This must be seen as intellectually *jejune*: it clashes with other proclivities for irrationalism and romanticism.

While the ENR's "scientific" efforts are questionable, the accusation of lack of compassion is less plausible. Although the ENR unabashedly defends *aristocracies or hierarchies*, as both "natural" and organic, it also criticizes liberal-capitalist modernity as "soft in ideas, but hard in practice."[16] The ENR argues that liberal capitalism conceals a crushing harshness behind its soft rhetoric of freedom and equality, a *real* "war of all against all."[17] Summarizing his critique of late modernity, Benoist writes: "I am appalled by the remarkable capacity of the majority of people to adapt without complaint to a society which I estimate to be, and I mean what I say, the worst kind of society ever to have existed. The worst, because the most subjected to the tyranny of the economy; the worst, because the least organic and therefore the most *in*human."[18]

Although some ENR members at one time advocated technocracy, they have now embraced *ecology* as one of the most hopeful tendencies on the planet today. The 1993 GRECE colloquium was dedicated to ecology. To the extent that it sets limits not only on the physical exploitation

15. Ferraresi, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

16. According to François-Bernard Huyghe: "It is an ideology that fiercely denounces all manifestations of inequality, yet advocates horrendous economic inequality and ruthless individual survivalism." See *La "Soft-Idéologie"* (Paris: Laffont, 1987).

17. See Benoist's indictment of Hayek as a savage ideologue of the harshest capitalism, for whom social justice, trade unions, society, and politics are illegitimate concepts, in *Éléments*, No. 68 (Summer 1990), pp. 5-14. Similarly, addressing the British context, *Perspectives* claims that: "The hidden agenda behind the Conservative government's assault on trade unions has been revealed. Far from championing the freedom of individual employees, it clearly regards them as little more than slaves to be sold on the international labour market. A Trade and Industry Department publication called *Britain — The Preferred Location*, aimed at attracting foreign money, enthuses: 'Employers are now under no statutory obligation to recognize a union. Many companies do not do so . . . Wages and salaries are markedly lower than those in the US, Japan or many countries within the European Community, and so too are the add-on costs of social security and other benefits'." See *Perspectives*, No. 6 (Summer 1993), p. 5.

18. *The Scorpion*, No. 10 (Autumn 1986), p. 32.

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of the planet, but also on the grotesque excesses of consumerism, ecology is seen as a hopeful development. The ENR hopes that ecology will continue to evolve a paradigm seeking to preserve cultural rootedness as well as the physical integrity of nature. Its preferences are for *communitarian ecology*. The ecological call for sacrifices in consumption would be much more meaningful if they were sacrifices for something more local, tangible, and particular than abstract ecological principles. It would apply to *this* land, *this* countryside, *this* country. Communitarian ecology calls for the careful shepherding of resources and stewardship of nature *for* the sake of a particular community deriving its sustenance from these resources. This also implies that either *all* communities will accept such policies, or that particular communities must be capable of repelling possible incursions from other communities refusing to accept this model. Such an ecological program cannot be based on wholesale de-urbanization, but rather on saner and more ecological management.

A central premise of this critique is that late capitalism is *not* a rational system of resource allocation. Enormous amounts of resources are wasted in advertising to inflame demand for unnecessary products, obsolescence is "built-in" to keep consumption high, etc. The personal and psychological rewards resulting from such a decrease in consumption, for a decrease in *quantity*, will be an increase in the *quality* of life, the emergence of time for pause and reflection, as well as a sense of participation in and belonging to a genuine, friendlier, and safer community.

A large sector in the ENR subscribes to what they call *le Gramscisme de Droite*. The ENR (like Gramsci) reverses Marx's idea of base and superstructure. It believes that changes in the ideological superstructure among the cultural and elite opinion-forming groups determine social change.[19] Gramsci called on intellectuals to change society in a socialist direction. The ENR adopts this approach for their own programs. This is called *metapolitics*. The ENR also identifies with the appeal to *populism* in Gramsci, although it rejects the rest of the Marxist apparatus.

The ENR explicitly *repudiates racism* and searches for allies in the Third World against the US.[20] Although the ENR is a European phenomenon, it also seeks alliances with Islam, East Asian semi-authoritarian regimes, India; etc. against the Anglo-American world. This is an extension of the idea of *pluralism in international politics* — a *multiplicity* of power

19. See Tomislav Sunic, *Against Democracy and Equality: The European New Right* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), especially the section "The Gramscism of the Right," pp. 29-32.
20. See Alain de Benoist, *Europe, Tiers Monde, Même Combat* (Paris, R. Laffont, 1986).

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centers and cultural spheres instead of *one* militarily, economically, and culturally hegemonic power-center. One hegemonic power severely constricts the choices available to humanity, and moves it along one predetermined path. This fits well with the ENR view of itself as a kind of *laboratory of ideas*.[21] Thus it is proud of its intellectualism and its eschewing of raw political conflict. *Nouvelle École*, one of the ENR's main journals, refuses to endorse political candidates, and is opposed to Le Pen's National Front. Finally, in terms of tactics, there is clearly the attempt to generate a *mystique*. ENR figures do not want to be perceived as stodgy, *petit-bourgeois* philistines, but as perceptive critics.

Try as it might, the ENR has not escaped Left-liberal criticism. Many routinely consider its members to be barely-disguised fascists, or part of "the eternal reactionary Right."[22] The definition of "reactionary" here is peculiarly wrong. Intellectually, the stand "against all totalitarianisms" clearly entails the rejection of the Nazi reductionism of race. However, the ENR has a tendency to dance on the rim of the volcano by including certain politically risqué imagery in its publications (e.g., photographs of Hitler in heroic poses) and questionable announcements.[23]

Although the ENR sees itself rooted in the 1968 revolutionary tradition,

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21. Thus Benoist has debated Thomas Molnar, an American paleoconservative and Catholic traditionalist. See Alain de Benoist (with Thomas Molnar) *L'Éclipse du Sacré* (Paris, La Table Ronde, 1986). Similarly, it has made an *opening to the Left* and some of its eclectic thinkers, notably Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, etc. The ENR also finds Jean Baudrillard extremely invigorating, with his criticism of American "hyperreality."

22. Ferraresi, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

23. Jean-Jacques Mourreau, "L'Europe Malade de Versailles." in *Éléments*, No. 69 (Fall 1990), p. 42. Consider the following two problematic examples in *Perspectives*. One is an obituary for Arno Breker attempting to dissociate his art from the people he served. See *Perspectives*, No. 2 (Summer 1991), p. 10. The other is a call in the previously cited Tarchi interview for the "normalization" of the experience of Italian fascism after the 1970's. That may have already happened. Yet the suggestion that Nazism could be similarily "normalized" is another matter. See *Perspectives*, No. 3 (Winter 1991-92), p. 24. Worse yet, *The Sting* newsletter practically advertises the work of Ernst Zündel, a Holocaust revisionist and neo-Nazi, as follows: "Across the Atlantic maverick publisher E. Zündel has been having a rough time for daring to publish and broadcast his 'revisionist' ideas. There is irony in a 'bigot' being harassed by the 'champions of free speech' for his views. He broadcasts into Germany from a kind of pirate radio (shades of the 30's — more irony!) Whether he is a "hate-monger" or not he is courageous: a small donation will get you info [followed by Zündel's address and telephone number in Toronto]." See *The Sting*, No. 15 (Winter 1993), p. 1. The most recent issue of the same newsletter includes the following passage: "In Canada, Mr. Zündel's publicity-catching gimmicks have unquestionably made doubt about the Nazi gassing claim more acceptable." See *The Sting*, No. 16 (Spring 1994), p. 1. This raises the suspicion that certain ENR members are not so much "reactionaries" as outright neo-Nazis. In English-speaking countries, the ENR is often confused, even among some of its adherents, with the far Right.

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Pierre-André Taguieff has traced its origins to the classical French far Right.[24] But to what extent can one be held accountable for positions held decades earlier and now strenuously rejected? Similarly, the ENR cannot be held responsible for the adoption of some of its ideas by groups such as Le Pen's National Front, or the Anglo-American or German far Right.[25]

The tendency to exaggerate in relation to the ENR is typified by Seymour Martin Lipset, who writes: "The best publicized European radical rightist tendency . . . has been the French 'New Right.' This movement . . . has, like the intellectual Right of pre-WWI France, focused its criticism on 'alien' anti-European forces, foreign immigrants, and radical and liberal forces. Supported by press lord Robert Hersant . . . once an overt anti-Semite and youthful collaborator with the Germans in WWII, the views of the New Right reach wide circles of the population, and may have helped stimulate widespread anti-Semitic violence in 1980."[26]

Some of the ENR's dabbling in politics, however, is problematic, although mostly in theory. Thus some ENR members support Zhirinovsky

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24. See the interview with Pierre-André Taguieff "Origines et Métamorphoses de la Nouvelle Droite," in *Vingtième Siècle*, No. 40 (October-December 1993), pp. 3-22. The second part of this interview is translated in this issue of *Télos*. In his work, *Sur La Nouvelle Droite, Jalons d'un Analyse Critique* (Descartes, 1994), Taguieff traces the long march of the ENR from a pro-Western, white racialist position in the 1960's, to its advanced, "differentialist" stance of the 1980's, "from race to culture." The first chapter of this book is translated in this issue of *Télos*.

25. The politically-correct Left in France, as typified by its "Appeal to Vigilance by Forty Intellectuals" against "the far Right" in 1993, adopts the mode of inquisitors and commissars, calling for blacklists, bannings, etc., and ironically targeting the ENR more vociferously than the National Front. Most of these documents are translated in this issue of *Télos*. The ENR has quickly responded to what it considers this "McCarthyism of the Left." See David Barney, Charles Champetier and Claude Lavirose, *La Nouvelle Inquisition; ses Acteurs, ses Méthodes, ses Victimes* (Le Labyrinthe, 1993).

26. Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Revolt Against Modernity," in Per Torsvik, Ed., *Mobilization, Center-Periphery Structures and Nation Building* (Bergen: Universitetforlaget, 1981), p. 477. Béla Köpeczi, a leading Hungarian Communist Party intellectual (and Hungary's Minister of Culture at the time), while condemning ENR tendencies, has at least given them philosophical credence: "This 'third way' of philosophy, idealist and subjectivist in principle, posits the epistemological dependence of being on consciousness, and places the subject at its center of interest, although, as it tries to base itself on science, and especially history, it tries to mask this. In accordance with this philosophical direction, life, as it were, mediates between subject and object. Life always becomes subjectified as feeling, while feeling objectifies itself as life, which creates the appearance of the elimination of the dualism. This role is also fulfilled by the category of myth, which was brought into the vocabulary of philosophy by Nietzsche. The mythical objectivity of the 'philosophy of life' (*Lebensphilosophie*) appears in the subject, which suggests a certain type of objectivity." Béla Köpeczi, *Neokonserwatyzm i Nowa Prawica*, tr. into Polish by Ester Lawnik (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza,1986), pp. 25-26.

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(or similar figures), Serbia's aggression, and a putative German-Russian alliance at the expense of most East European countries — all in the name of anti-Americanism.[27] The ENR also runs into problems with traditional religion and nationalism. Roman Catholicism is probably the only remaining serious traditional religious force (of historical duration) in Europe today. However strenuously the ENR rejects it, the similarities of some of its positions to those of traditional Catholic organicism are all too obvious (anti-capitalism, the stress on the social, and attacks on gross materialism and consumerism).[28] It is ironic that the ideas of René Géunon, and especially Julius Evola (such as the "political soldier," considered pagan and terroristic in their implications by some dogmatic liberal critics[29]), are being taken up by a professedly Catholic tendency. As both C. G. Jung and Camille Paglia have indicated, Catholicism was clearly more "pagan" than Protestantism. One of the main Protestant accusations against Roman Catholicism was that it was a disguised paganism (with its worship of Mary and the Saints, its sumptuous churches, and its religious icons and relics). However, "the integralist French Catholic Right . . . considers the New Right as 'Masonic adepts of the Satanic Revolution against the one true living God'. . . ."[30]

Relations to traditional nation-states are also problematic. To what extent should the regionalization and break-up of nation-states be encouraged? Is this not an invitation to community dissolution? What about countries such as Poland that will clearly not let go of their national identity? What about the threat of a Greater Germany, perhaps lurking behind this proposed "regionalization," possibly involving the reconstruction of a German-dominated East Prussia, Silesia, and Western

27. In this, they follow Ernst Niekisch and the "National Bolsheviks" of interwar Germany, who proposed an alliance of Germany with Stalin's "workers'-state," at the expense of "reactionary" East European societies. Niekisch is often pointed to as a prototypical ENR hero for his resistance to Nazism, but the main point of his daring attack on Hitler in 1938 was that Nazism was a disguised Catholicism and therefore a "death-wish philosophy" — hardly the most devastating criticism. See François Lapeyre, "Ernst Niekish, Un Destin Allemand," in *Éléments*, No. 73 (Spring 1992), pp. 32-33. The strong rhetorical opposition to the Versailles Treaties (and affection for a big Germany) in some of their historical articles could also be interpreted as a further threat to Eastern Europe. See Jean-Jacques Mourreau, "L'Europe Malade de Versailles," *op. cit.*, pp. 23-42.

28. This would be close to Derek Holland's "Third Position" in England, which attempts to synthesize "Catholic traditionalism, European nationalism, and the ENR." See "Polityczni Zolnierze," in *Stanczyk*, No. 17 (1992), pp. 39-44.

29. Ferraresi, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-140, links the ENR to far Right terrorists.

30. Cited in Jarosiaw Tomasiewicz, "Przeciwko Równości i Demokracji: Nowa Prawica we Francji," in *Myśl Polska* (November 1-15 1993), p. 5.

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Pomerania, as well as the weakening (or disintegration) of France by the secessions of Brittany, Provence, Normandy, etc.? What about relations with the US? Does the ENR realize that some of its most cherished ideas, i.e. ecology and even neo-paganism, are very popular in the US, especially in California? Does it intend to expand its activities to the US, presumably among the libertarian Left or ecological and New Age circles?

The ENR has an extremely simplistic vision of the US — reducing it to Disneyland, Coca-Cola, etc. Clearly the US is more than New York, L.A., and San Francisco, more than "rap, crack et Big Mac." It is a huge country of diverse regions and towns. Is the ENR more critical of "narrow-minded small-town America" (which American conservatives consider "the heartland"), or "big-city America" (which most American conservatives consider nightmarish, but Left-liberals defend as centers of progress)? Is it America's Puritanism (of which little seems to be left in actual family *mores*), or a burgeoning decadence which is their target? At any rate, the center of anti-Americanism today is the US itself. Considering the fact that the US is being consumed by self-hatred and anti-Americanism, the ENR will have to rethink its position *vis à vis* the moral residues of contemporary American society. Because of the ENR's violent anti-Americanism, it has hardly any relations with American paleoconservatives. The emphasis on federalism, cultural particularity and local autonomy, however, may pave the way for a new dialogue.

Two problems with ENR theory are rather obvious. First, there is the tension between elitism and populism. On the one hand, it identifies with the Olympian elitism of figures such as Nietzsche and Evola, harboring contempt for the masses. On the other, it wants to embrace an "organic democracy" rooted in Herder, German romanticism, the German Conservative Revolution and, to a certain extent, Carl Schmitt. Second, there is its over-reliance on the ancient Greek heritage, as reflected in the name of one of its main groups, GRECE. Even a superficial reading of Nietzsche betrays his condemnation of the influence of the Greek heritage in the development of Europe. Although "the gifts of the Greeks" can be considered multivalent, clearly traditions of both political democracy and science had their origins in Athens. Is it legitimate to trace the errors of the West only to the Judeo-Christian heritage? Should not the classical heritage also come in for some careful scrutiny?

At any rate, the obsessive search for the origins of present European decline leads the ENR astray. One of the most obvious reasons for its adoption of a "metapolitical" position may be due to the fact that ideas such as neo-paganism are difficult to relate to today's socio-political realities. Consequently, the ENR is often accused of being a typical French

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salon phenomenon focused on German thinkers, in line with the old WWII "collaborationist" tradition (the ENR has sought to rehabilitate some of those figures), practising "*Biedermaier*" politics.

It is all too easy to overemphasize the ENR's radicalism. In some sense it may be nothing more than an esoteric version of de Gaulle's political program and an expression of Gallicism, with all of its cultural pride, *joie-de-vivre*, intellectual flashiness, and unabashed eroticism. After all, de Gaulle's political genius has been consistently underestimated in the Anglo-American world. An anti-Nazi, anti-Communist, and anti-American (he led the Free French, dealt with Communist terror after the Liberation, and continued to oppose *les deux hégémonies* to the end of his life); a compassionate but strong nationalist, as well as a decolonizer; a champion of the unity of a "Europe of fatherlands" full of respect for tradition and the Catholic Church, while suspicious of progressivism, liberalism, and democracy, he is someone with whom the ENR could easily identify.

The ENR's hopes for the future can be summarized as follows: 1) A return to meaningful politics (aiming at a restoration of the public sphere) against an apolitical, juridically-determined, economically-focused liberalism and formally egalitarian democracy. This politics would have to be both erotic and aesthetic, and predicated on "organic democracy." 2) A restoration of community spirit. The ENR would like to see the dissolution of the US into regional and ethnic states. It prefigures a genuinely pluralistic global framework in opposition to American liberal universalism. (Pluralism of cultures across the planet requires some exclusivity of cultures in given areas and regions). 3) A braking of tendencies towards consumerism, commodification, commodity-fetishism, consumer-tribes, technologization, etc., by means of a "rooted radicalism" and "communitarian ecology."

Following the recent victory in Italy of Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*, today a more dynamic Right seems to have some chance of succeeding in Europe. Although Berlusconi's victory has little to do with the ENR, the Northern League's regionalism is fully in line with ENR ideas, while the softening of doctrinaire positions which made possible the victory of the National Alliance in the South may also have something to do with ENR influence. Yet Berlusconi and many sectors of the conventional Right have placed a born-again capitalism at the center of their program. This leads to a harshness toward social problems and a contempt for anyone who cannot compete. This conventional Right ignores the fact that humanistically-trained, aristocratically-minded people who could lead a genuine cultural Right are probably the least able to prosper in the projected brave new capitalist world. The obsessive

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focus on "the discipline of the market" is antithetical to the rooted popular culture and ENR's "high culture."

The circulation of ENR journals is rather small, but intellectual influence can rarely be measured by circulation figures. By pursuing its "metapolitical" strategy, the ENR has created a new climate where some Right ideas can be voiced more freely and with less opprobrium. What makes the ENR arguments attractive is that often they are simply *good*, *persuasive* arguments. After all, the substitution of a particularistic "right to be different" for a belief in an innate, absolutistic white and Western supremacy was a much-needed shift. The ENR has also understood that the orthodox Christian approach to sexual and family morality, in an extremely permissive and sexually-obsessed age, was *untenable*. The ENR has also renewed much of the criticism of capitalism from an organicist-aristocratic context at a time when the Left seems to have fallen silent on this matter in its uncritical and opportunistic embrace of liberalism. Only in today's dessicated political landscape are people shocked by these positions, as the organic and Catholic Right — partially linked to various pre-Marxian socialisms as well as syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism — had traditionally been in the forefront of the critique of capitalism. (In the 19th century, John Ruskin could readily claim: "I am a Tory of the sternest sort, a socialist, a communist"). ENR ideas are also intimately intertwined with central aspects of French identity and national character. Thus the ENR is divided concerning European unification, perhaps because it sees it as a possible vehicle for the continuation of French hegemony through such archetypically French figures as Jacques Delors.

At any rate, under no circumstances can the ENR be characterized as a "neo-fascist" residue destined to play only a very limited role in the future of Europe. Despite certain obvious problems and inconsistencies, the ENR has clearly transcended its origins in the far Right. Its formulations on certain issues have been pioneering, though often, and ironically, coming out of nothing more than a reactivation of half-forgotten arguments in the great store of non-fascist organicist thought. The ENR today is very much in the forefront of key debates concerning personal and cultural identities, and "the sources of the self." The intellectually-honest Left could benefit by appropriating some of these ideas. On the whole, the ENR represents the most intellectual, sophisticated, least dogmatic and most positive element "*on* the Right," engaged in the reconfiguration of the political landscape after the collapse of communism and the terminal crisis of liberalism have rendered traditional categories hopelessly obsolete.

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The Italian New Right

Franco Sacchi

The Italian New Right (INR) is a metapolitical movement representing one of the most interesting developments in Italy today. Even though its origins trace back to the political milieu of the Italian radical Right and the MSI (*Movimento Sociale Italiano* — the official Italian neofascist party), at least two important elements sharply set it apart from its original context. The first is its approach to modernity. While the far Right tends to reject modernity as a whole (as a process of degradation characterized by loss of political unity, secularization and nihilism), the INR denounces its contradictions from a critical and constructive perspective. In this sense INR is more detached, in sharp contrast with 18th century conservative philosophers.

The second element has to do with the traditional Right's approach to politics. The INR focuses essentially on culture, rather than direct political action. This struggle for cultural hegemony need not be very aggressive. Based on the assumption that the political categories of Right and Left are obsolete, the INR has often indicated a willingness to search for a new synthesis. This is why the INR defines itself as right-wing Gramscian. From its beginning (1974) it has tried to reconcile contradictory positions, such as anti-egalitarianism and libertarianism. It breaks with traditional Right schemes of law and order by embracing a culture of tolerance, although it locates this tolerance within a different politico-cultural context extraneous to the abstract and universal egalitarianism of the Enlightenment. The INR contraposes a culture of difference to abstract egalitarianism as the only defense against the modernist project to remold mankind in terms of one single social model.

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What makes the INR an interesting cultural phenomenon is also what has led to its ostracism from the political environment within which it arose (in particular from the MSI, which has remained mostly frozen in old positions). Thus a new focus on organic community, as opposed to society, led to the discarding of the idea of a strong central state (typical of the classical Right) in favor of federalist forms of government based on small communities predicated on ethnic and cultural identities.

Before discussing the INR's *Weltanschauung,* it is necessary to recall the historical context within which this cultural movement developed. Italian Right culture was heavily influenced by the fascist experience for many decades after WWII. This constituted a severe limitation. For an entire generation of veterans, the loss of the war resulted in a feeling of isolation and alienation from political life. This post-fascist generation found itself without any clear reference points either in politics or culture — a state of affairs encouraged by the new cultural elites, which effectively ghettoized the MSI, along with every cultural expression somehow related to the fascist experience. A party founded by ex-fascists, the MSI and its cultural organs (such as the *Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo*) seemed unable to find new footing in post-WWII Italy. Within such a context the ideas of the far Right — especially those of the philosopher Julius Evola (1898-1974) — had considerable impact.

Influenced by Eastern traditions, Evola's philosophy is based on the rejection of linearity in history and on the assumption of its cyclical character. His approach is foreign to modern Western culture and relies on myths, symbols, and sagas as sources of understanding of history and reality. His cyclical vision of history postulates the deterioration of a spiritually superior stage to one of decadence, where only a small elite stands out within a world in ruins. This vision had a powerful and reassuring impact on a generation that had lost a war and felt estranged in a modern mass society characterized by the reduction of qualitative aspects of life to vulgar economic values. This made all the more sense in opposition to the predominant idea of modernity as the final stage of a period of decadence — something which nourished pessimism and existentialist passivity.

Interestingly enough, Evola's philosophy became an important point of reference also for a young generation of political activists who grew up in the middle of the economic boom of the late 1950's and 1960s. For these people (including most of the future leaders of the INR) who chose the wrong side, Evola provided an organic and coherent

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Weltanschauung to oppose their peers in the mainstream culture in the 1960s. Of course, the fascination with Evola's work in esoteric Eastern cultures also had to do with the spirit of the times — a period when there was a quest among the young for alternatives to Western materialism and bourgeois lifestyles. By the mid-1970s, a group of activists and intellectuals in Florence decided it was time to break with the predominant schemes and to abandon neo-fascism and the ivory tower in which Evola's theory would have inexorably relegated them. As opposed as ever to the omnipresent economistic deviations of liberalism, they could no longer accept most of the traditional Right's tenets. Totalitarianism, racism, nationalism, and an obsession for moral order no longer exercised a great attraction.

The INR was born when, in 1974, Marco Tarchi, the future INR leader, and a group of like-minded friends and militants met with members of the French New Right (FNR). This meeting was decisive, because it provided these young political militants (all of them in their twenties) with the inspiration and guide they needed. At that time the FNR was already very active and under the guidance of more mature intellectuals. It had broken the cultural barriers of the traditional Right, broadening its interests to include new disciplines such as ethnology, sociobiology, psychiatry, etc., hitherto unexplored by the traditional Right. It had also read a wide variety of authors, such as Hannah Arendt, Gramsci, Simone Weil and those interwar writers associated with the German Conservative Revolution. Led by Alain de Benoist, it brought more than fresh air. It provided the answer to many questions and paved the way to new cultural paths.

The first publication of the INR (in December 1974) was an underground newsletter called *La Voce Della Fogna* (The Voice of the Sewer). Yet it was the best way to develop a new language and show that the Right also had something to say about cinema, rock music and more. By deploying considerable self-irony, the INR began to attack the MSI's gray political world in the pages of its publication. The mid-1970s was a frantic period in Italy as well as in many other Western countries. At that time, at least for a brief period (before the explosion of terrorism), a convergence of young Left and Right movements seemed possible. It was then that Tarchi and his associates decided to enter political and philosophical debates. Evola's detachment from the modern world was not very useful in cultural confrontations with representations of such a world. It was then that the INR began developing a metapolitical program which, even though firmly rooted in Right tradition (primarily in

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terms of its rejection of the Enlightenment paradigm) could enter into dialogue with opposing political forces.

In 1976 *La Voce della Fogna* gave way to *Diorama Letterario* and began to develop a new system of ideas. During this period the INR outlook became well defined and in some aspects moved away from its French counterpart. It advocated organic communal bonds against capitalist society and its mechanical, quantitative, depersonalized, abstract, over-intellectualized relations and rejected market utilitarian attitudes in the name of a better way of life; it vindicated the myth of roots, leading to an organicist concept of the world founded on a rank order among identities that differ because of their origins, development, and functions. Most of all, it rejected the egalitarian myth.[1]

The clarification of these ideas continued up to 1978, when the first official INR journal, *Elementi*, began publication. The very first editorial clearly reiterates the FNR's call for a new synthesis cutting across political divides to overcome the traditional dichotomy of Left and Right — even at the cost of questioning traditional tenets. This broadening of horizon was a result of the metapolitical choice, the most distinguishing feature of both the INR and the FNR. This meant further estrangement from the neo-fascist world dominated by the myth of direct action. In the opening editorial Tarchi writes: "During the ten years since 1968 we have understood that cultural power is the primary engine, an indispensable tool."[2] This awareness that conquering political society had to be preceded by the conquest of civil society was a direct consequence of the FNR's interest in Gramsci's thought. As Enzo Raisi writes: "The metapolitical choice is nothing but a corollary of the so-called rightist Gramscism, i.e., an interpretation of Gramscian ideology by the FNR, which tends to condition and form a mentality to reach a cultural hegemony, as a premise for stable political power."[3]

In 1980 and 1981 there were a series of meetings during which the best of INR members sought to analyze the experience of the 1970s; to clarify its cultural positions and answer charges of ambiguities and lack of clear objectives. 1981 is also the year when Tarchi was purged from the MSI. This was crucial for future INR developments and marked a definitive watershed. Today Tarchi (who also edits the new journal

1. Franco Ferraresi, "Julius Evola, Tradition, Reaction and the Radical Right," in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (1987), p. 142.

2. Marco Tarchi, "Perché Elementi," in *Elementi*, No. 1 (1978), p. 2.

3. Enzo Raisi, *Storia ed Idee della Nuova Destra Italiana* (Rome: Settimo Sigillo, 1990), p. 56.

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Trasgressioni) is one of the harshest critics of the MSI (or Alleanza Nazionale, as its successor is now called). The critique of nationalism and the vindication of federalism and ethnic identities constitute the most interesting departures from the old Right and define its very identity.

The INR does not see modernity as an enemy but as given. The main target of the INR critique is liberalism — the predominant current of thought during the last two centuries. Liberalism is accused of being unable to provide clear answers to today's problems. For example, utilitarianism's negative anthropology (seen as an important component of modern liberal thought) cannot provide the basis of a solid community. Structural tensions of modern society cannot be overcome by aggregating the particular egoism of the various individuals. At a political level the Hobbesian contractual model has been progressively weakened by a vision according to which individuals who do not recognize prescriptive norms or any particular link to the social body can simply follow the "rules of the game" while pursuing their own interests. According to liberalism, this is possible because abstract and anonymous market forces work independently of any self-referential politico-economical context. As Tarchi has often pointed out, it is not difficult to understand how this contemporary vision can be seen as the main culprit for widespread alienation, privatization and social apathy. The economistic logic of mercantilism is no longer able to provide solutions to the problems of a complex society. While liberalism relegates people's needs exclusively to the materialist sphere, the consumerist mentality simultaneously expands the expectations of all, ruling out the possibility of fulfilling its promise.

In this situation the state can only manage conflicts in the short run, while governments of complex societies require long-term solutions. To understand such an "impasse," it is important to analyze the genesis of liberalism, which is in reality an ideology pretending to be a method. It has absorbed some principles of democracy, such as freedom of speech, tolerance, consent, etc. Yet the central core of liberalism contains a "hard ideology" predicated on a negative anthropology — individualism, the subordination of the political to the economic sphere, the rejection of collective identities, rationalistic materialism, disregard of authority, etc. Today there are alarming symptoms, such as barbarization of community bonds and detachment of citizens from public life, which liberalism attempts to deal with by increasing consumption. Using a simplistic analysis, the Western ruling classes

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can only think in terms of employment and investments to carry out a marginal redistribution of wealth and contain social tensions. A blind trust in the welfare state has led to the assumption that future democracy would have to be based on a planetary market economy moderated only by welfare measures. In other words, a global society of abundance is seen as an immense outlet for social tensions (even though it is unclear how the entire planet, with five billion inhabitants, could sustain the level of production and consumption of an efficient capitalist society).

This myopic vision of the world ignores too many things. Latest technological developments have transformed social structures and created new subjects. The disappearance of the traditional working class, the collapse of the family as an institution, a new and more problematic relation between leisure time and working time are only some of the new predicaments. The end of the Cold War and subsequent geopolitical transformations have made possible an unexpected level of conflictuality with an explosion of fundamentalism and nationalism. The INR points out how in such a changed framework society is increasingly divided into a large number of small interest groups, lobbies and sub-communities that fight tenaciously to protect their turf. The technocratic approach of liberal institutions can only deal with individual instances and seem to intensify conflicts rather than solve them. This is why the INR has criticized liberalism's attempt to eliminate the welfare state without at the same time providing concrete alternatives.

Recent electoral campaigns in most Western countries show a dire lack of alternatives. Right and Left are indistinguishable and their programs are uniformly dull. As Serge Latouche put it, "In the present crisis, Right and Left agree that those who are already marginalized must be excluded and both emphasize that it is not possible to do more and better, given the laws of the economy and their constraints. To be realistic, with the triumph of a global liberalism social action becomes relegated to the management of charity. Intermarrying and reciprocally borrowing ideas and programs from each other, Right and Left have ended up looking the same. What was possible has already been done by either one or the other. What was not possible, they could not do. Thus today there is no realistic program on the political horizon. Someone says that there is something worse than failing to satisfy one's own desires: to satisfy them because in that case there would no longer be anything to desire. Modern politics now faces this predicament. It has destroyed its own habitat (the nation-state), its agents (the citizens)

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and lost its objectives — the domination of the social sphere."[4]

Within the INR there are two main currents seeking to find a solution to the aporias of liberalism and, more generally, modern thought. The first, the "decisionist" wing, traces its ideas to Carl Schmitt, while the second, headed by Tarchi, focuses on organic thought. Several times the "decisionists" have been accused of proposing an authoritarian model. They have rejected these accusations, claiming that there is a fundamental political dimension beyond the state which is necessary to provide a direction to the political destiny of the collectivity. In opposition to modern liberalism that considers politics a matter of management, the INR decisionist current sees politics as a creative activity, with decision being the supreme political act. More than a will to power, the decision is a will to exist. This collectivity is essentially "a community of destiny," regulated by the idea of plurality and difference. It is an extremely dynamic environment directed essentially through decision. Without the energy of the decisionist moment, society runs the risk of falling into a meaningless ahistorical dimension. This is why Fukuyama's essay concerning the end of history and the triumph of liberalism as a universal model captured the attention of the INR and became the object of a severe criticism, despite its inherent mediocrity.

The current identified with the defense of the primacy of the organic community provides a different approach to the same problems. The main target of their critique is individualism's disintegration of the communitarian dimension. The organicist current opposes both methodological and ontological individualism. Yet this does not imply a rejection of individual rights, the development of autonomous subjects, and the principle of the individuality of the person. On the contrary, the INR maintains that, paradoxically, these universal principles are abrogated by the dynamics of modern liberalism itself. They can be meaningfully upheld only within concrete organic communities. This organicist current focuses on modern forms of human aggregation in order to reestablish the preconditions of political participation. Here Ferdinand Tönnies' work has been fundamental. According to him, in a community every individual naturally belongs to the social body. Language, geographic proximity, traditions, culture, religion, etc., define communitarian

4. Serge Latouche, "Il MAUSS è Apolitico?" in *Diorama Letterario*, No. 154 (1992), p. 26. Serge Latouche is a member of the MAUSS (*Mouvement Antiutilitarist dans le Science Sociales*), a current of Left thought whose purpose is to question the foundations of modernity (in this case utilitarianism). The INR and the FNR have paid considerable attention to their ideas and have opened a constructive debate with them.

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bonds. The individual does not choose to belong to a certain community, but simply lives in it organically. Society, on the other hand, is artificial since it is based on a contractual model according to which the individual has to make a rational decision to take part in the life of the collectivity. Tönnies brilliantly describes the principle of unity of individual life as well as that of the life of the community, which is physical, psychical and cultural at the same time. Yet the INR concept of community is original and has nothing to do with a restoration of a pre-modern condition.

The INR talks about a "functional principle" that, combined with cultural and territorial elements, allows the possibility of a secure identity through a dynamic integration within the collectivity. Communitarian forms can be effective only on the basis of functional roles which confer relevant political identities. These communities should mediate between the individual and society. It is at this level that the individual can intervene effectively in the public sphere and, therefore, in the political process.

As is often pointed out, the organicist model tends to generate aggressivity toward external enemies. Here the INR's positions are similar to those of the communitarians. The INR claims that every society must have a common core of values shared by the vast majority. The alternative is social disintegration. Yet a common core of values does not rule out the possibility of different interpretations. According to Tarchi, in communitarian systems a diversity of viewpoints is the foundation of the political system because it provides the energy for further development. Following the FNR, the INR criticizes the contemporary process of globalization of Western liberalism. The universalization of a single vision of the world poses problems. Thus a liberal ideology that emphasizes freedom of abstract individuals without considering their relations to culture, territory, language, etc. neglects the people's cultural specificity. In order to provide meaning to individual existence a culture must be rooted in a concrete environment. As Tarchi put it, "there is an important difference between calling for a universal formal framework (to regulate relations among peoples) and imposing a universalist ideology that simply hypothesizes one's own culture as a universal paradigm."[5] Universalist ideologies are disguised particular ideologies, which homogenize all preexisting cultures into a

5. Marco Tarchi, "Identità, Razzismo e Intolleranza," in *Diorama Letterario*, No. 173 (1993), p. 43.

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universalist model. The INR thus explains the growth of fundamentalism as a reaction to the cultural aggression of Western ideology. Islamic fundamentalism and East European nationalism are seen as the consequence of uncertainty and the loss of cultural identity — the same phenomena which, in Western societies, result in violence and xenophobia. Not by accident, racism and xenophobia are widespread among the poorest social groups, who bear the brunt of the negative effects of illegal immigration, urban sprawl and the impersonality of relations.

According to the INR, the reappropriation of cultural and ethnic identity in a communitarian context is the most effective way to confront this colossal attempt to subordinate the political to the laws of the economy and transform the world into a global market. "The communitarian bonds peculiar to ethnic belonging are radically opposed to all these aspects of the globalized society. The experience of ethnicity reestablishes the individual at the center of a network of direct and immediate social relations — immediate as the community of culture, tradition, language. It allows the recovery of contact with reality, beyond the mediating veil of a self-perpetuating global information. It minimizes the influence of extraneous decisional power to the ethnic community and therefore allows for a more substantial participation by the single individual in a process of collective will formation."[6]

More generally, what the INR proposes is a "society of communities." In order to avoid a generalized apartheid, these communities must be open, ready to assimilate new influences and new members, while remaining aware of cultural differences. According to Tarchi, this is "a drastic alternative to a society based on Enlightenment principles, i.e., a liberal society which has the individual as the only reference point and based on an abstract egalitarianism corresponding to no concrete social relations."[7] The INR strongly criticizes the Jacobin model of the centralized nation-state in which all too often a hegemonic group dominates or forcibly assimilates other ethnic groups. Similarly, it sees nationalism as a product of modernity. In some cases, however, Tarchi claims that nationalism can be a legitimate means to constitute identity and political unity.

On the whole, the INR follows the FNR in privileging federalism as the political model able to safeguard cultural identities. Under Benoist's influence, the INR uses the term "empire" to refer to the project of a

6. Dario Durando, "The Rediscovery of Ethnic Identity," in *Telos* 97 (Fall 1993), p. 25.

7. Tarchi, *Identità, Razzismo e Intolleranza*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

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European federation. The point is to avoid confusion with the way federalism is interpreted today, following after its involution in the US into another version of the nation-state. Within such a context, organic democracy and ethno-cultural identities cannot be imposed from above. An organic community can only exist naturally; it cannot be created artificially. Any effort to do so runs the risk of totalitarianism. This explains the INR's metapolitical preferences, i.e., why it avoids direct political participation.

During the recent Italian elections, which led to the defeat of the traditional Left and the formation of a rightist government, the INR was often identified by the media with the emerging political forces that won the election, i.e., the Northern League (a federalist and populist movement), *Forza Italia* (Berlusconi's party) and *Alleanza Nazionale* (the neo-fascist coalition). The INR, however, has nothing to do with the new government. Surprisingly, the entire electoral campaign was based on an artificial polarization between Right and Left that did not leave any space for real political debate. No longer critical of capitalism, the traditional Italian Left simply defended the remnants of the welfare state, and therefore its corruption, waste and counterproductivity, against proposals by the opposition to radically rationalize it. As Ernesto Galli Della Loggia has argued, within such a context the INR may very well be the only real Left remaining in Italy. As a metapolitical movement the INR seeks to open a new political debate in order to prepare the ground for new long-term political projects. It is still difficult to avoid the Left-Right dichotomy — especially since those who claim to be neither Left nor Right are automatically considered rightist. At any rate, the INR no longer sees itself as part of the Right as that political position has been historically understood. It certainly has absolutely nothing to do with the old world of neo-fascism. Its main objective is to develop alliances with new political groups, such as the Greens, religious movements and Left intellectuals willing to rethink fundamental political questions, i.e. all those who do not consider modern liberalism as the final stage of history.

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*The Idea of Empire**

Alain de Benoist

Europe was the place where two great models of *polity*, of political unity, were elaborated, developed and clashed: the nation, preceded by the monarchy, and the empire. The last emperor of the Latin West, Romulus Augustus, was deposed in 475. Only the Eastern empire remained. But after the Western empire was dismantled, a new unitary consciousness seems to have arisen. In 795, Pope Leon III started to date his encyclicals based on the reign of Charles, king of the Franks and patrician of the Romans, rather than on the reign of the emperor of Constantinople. Five years later in Rome, on Christmas Day in the year 800, Leon III placed the imperial crown on Charlemagne's head.

This is the first *renovatio* of the empire. It obeys the theory of transfer (*translatio imperii*) according to which the empire Charlemagne revived is a continuation of the Roman empire, thus putting an end to theological speculations inspired by the prophet David who foresaw the end of the world after the end of the fourth empire, i.e., after the end of the Roman empire which succeeded the Babylonian, the Persian and the Alexandrian empires.

At the same time, the *renovatio* of the empire also breaks with the Augustinian idea of a radical opposition between *civitas terrena* and *civitas Dei*, which could have been understood to mean that a Christian empire was only a chimera. In fact, Leon III had a new strategy — a Christian empire, where the emperor would be the defender of the City of God. The emperor derived his powers from the pope, whose

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spiritual powers he reproduced in the temporal realm. Of course, all quarrels surrounding investitures will stem from this equivocal formulation which makes the emperor a subject in the spiritual order but at the same time makes him the head of a temporal hierarchy whose sacred character will soon be asserted.

After the Verdun Treaty (843) sealed the division of the empire between Charlemagne's three grandsons (Lothario I, Ludwig the German, and Charles the Bald), the king of Saxony, Henry I, was crowned emperor in 919. The empire then became Germanic. After Carolingian power was dislocated, it was restored again in the center of Europe with the Othonians and the Franks in 962 to the benefit of King Otto I of Germania. It remained the major political force in Europe until the middle of the 13th century, when it was officially transformed into the *Sacrum Romanum Imperium*. After 1442, the appellation "of the German nation" was added.

It is not possible to retrace the history of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation here beyond pointing out that throughout its history it was a composite bringing together three components: antiquity, Christianity, and German identity.

Historically the imperial idea began to disintegrate in the Renaissance, with the appearance of the first national states. Of course, the 1525 victory of Pavia, won by imperial forces against Francis II's troops, seemed to reverse the trend. At the time, this event was considered very important and caused a renaissance of Ghibellinism in Italy. After Charles V, however, the imperial title did not go to his son Philip, and the empire was again reduced to a local affair. After the Peace of Westphalia (1648), it was seen less and less as something dignified and more and more as a simple confederation of territorial states. The decline went on for another two and a half centuries. On April 6, 1806, Napoleon brought the revolution to fruition by destroying what remained of the empire. Francis II resigned his title and the Holy Roman Empire was no more.

At first sight, the concept of empire is not easy to understand, given the often contradictory uses that have been made of it. In his dictionary, Littré is satisfied with a tautological definition: an empire is "a state ruled by an emperor." This is a bit too brief. Like the *polis* [*cité*] or the nation, the empire is a kind of political unity; unlike the monarchy or the republic, it is not a form of government. This means that the empire is compatible *a priori* with different forms of government. The first article in the Weimar Constitution stated that "the

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German Reich is a republic." Even in 1973, the constitutional court at Karlsruhe did not hesitate to claim that "the German Reich remains a subject of international law." The best way to understand the substantive reality of the empire is by comparing it with that of the nation or the nation-state — the latter represents the end of a process of nationality-formation for which France more or less provides the best example.

In its current meaning, the nation appears as a *modern* phenomenon. In this respect, both Colette Beaune[1] and Bernard Guene are wrong in locating the birth of the nation very early in history. This idea rests on anachronisms; it confuses "royal" and "national," the formation of nationality and the formation of nation. The formation of nationality corresponds with the birth of a sense of belonging which begins to go beyond the simple natal horizon during the war against the Plantagenets — a sense reinforced during the Hundred Years War. But it should not be forgetten that in the Middle Ages the word "nation" (from *natio*, "birth") had an exclusively ethnic meaning — the *nationes* of the Sorbonne are simply groups of students who speak a different language. In the same way, the word "country," which only appeared in France with the 16th century humanists (Dolet, Ronsard, Du Bellay), originally referred to the medieval notion of "homeland." When more than a mere attachment to the land of one's birth, "patriotism" is fidelity to the lord or allegiance to the person of the king. Even the word "France" appeared relatively late. Starting with Charles III (called the Simple) the title borne by the king of France was *Rex Francorum*. The expression *Rex Franciae* only appeared at the beginning of the 13th century, under Philippe-Auguste, after the defeat of the Count of Toulouse au Muret, which ended with the annexation of the countries speaking the *langue d'oc* and with the persecution of the Cathars.

The idea of nation was fully constituted only in the 18th century, especially during the revolution. At the beginning it referred to a concept of sovereignty opposed to that of absolute monarchy. It brought together those who thought the same politically and philosophically — it was no longer the king but the "nation" which embodied the country's political unity. Finally, it was the abstract location where people could conceive of and exercise their rights, where individuals were transformed into citizens.

First of all, the nation is the sovereign people which, in the best of all cases, delegates to the king only the power to apply the law emanating

1. *Naissance de la Nation France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

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from the general will; then it is those peoples who recognize the authority of a state, inhabit the same territory and recognize each other as members of the same political unity; finally, it is the political unity itself. This is why the counter-revolutionary tradition, which exalts the aristocratic principle, initially refrains from valuing the nation. Conversely, Article 3 of the 1789 Declaration of Rights proclaims "The principle of all sovereignty essentially resides in the nation." Bertrand de Jouvenel even wrote that: "In hindsight, the revolutionary movement seems to have had as its goal the foundation of the cult of the nation"[2]

What distinguishes the empire from the nation? First of all, the fact that the empire is not primarily a *territory* but essentially an *idea* or a *principle*. The political order is determined by it — not by material factors or by possession of a geographical area. It is determined by a spiritual or juridical idea. In this respect, it would be a serious mistake to think that the empire differs from the nation primarily in terms of size in that it is somehow "a bigger nation than others". Of course, an empire covers a wide area. What is important, however, is that the emperor holds power by virtue of embodying something which goes beyond simple possession. As a *dominus mundi*, he is the suzerain of princes and kings, i.e., he rules over sovereigns, not over territories, and represents a power transcending the community he governs.

Julius Evola writes: "The empire should not be confused with the kingdoms and nations which constitute it because it is something qualitatively different, prior to and above each of them in terms of its principle"[3] Before it expressed a system of supra-national territorial hegemony, "the old Roman notion of *imperium* referred to the pure power of command, the quasi-mystical force of *auctoritas*." During the Middle Ages, the prevailing distinction was precisely one between *auctoritas* (moral and spiritual superiority) and *potestas* (simple political public power exercised by legal means). In both the medieval empire and the Holy Roman Empire, this distinction underlies the separation between imperial authority and the emperor's sovereign authority over a particular people. For example, Charlemagne was part emperor and part king of the Lombards and the Franks. From then on, allegiance to the emperor was not submission to a people or to a particular country. In the same way, in the Austro-Hungarian empire, loyalty to the Hapsburg dynasty constituted "the fundamental link between peoples and

2. *Les Débuts de l'Etat Moderne: Une Histoire des Idées Politiques au XIXe Siécle* (Paris: Fayard, 1976) p. 92.

3. *Révolte Contre le Monde Moderne*, (Montreal: L'Homme, 1972) p. 121.

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replaced patriotism" (Jean Branger); it prevailed over relations of a national or confessional character.

This spiritual character of the imperial principle directly provoked the famous quarrel concerning investitures which pitted the partisans of the pope and those of the emperor against each other for many centuries. Lacking any military content, the notion of empire originally acquired a strong theological cast in the medieval Germanic world, where one could see a Christian reinterpretation of the Roman idea of *imperium*. Considering themselves the executors of universal sacred history, the emperors deduced from this the idea that the empire, as a "sacred" institution (*Sacrum imperium*), must constitute an autonomous power with respect to the pope. This is the reason for the quarrel between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines.

The emperor's followers who denied the pope's pretensions —the Ghibellines — found support in the old distinction between *imperium* and *sacerdotium*, seen as two equally important spheres both instituted by God. This interpretation was an extension of the Roman concept of relations between the emperor and the *pontifex maximus*, each being superior to the other in their respective orders. The Ghibelline viewpoint was not to subject spiritual authority to temporal power but to claim for imperial power an equal spiritual authority in the face of the Church's exclusive pretensions. So for Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, the emperor is the half-divine intermediary whereby God's justice is spread on earth. This *renovatio*, which makes the emperor the essential source of law and confers on him the character of "living law on earth" (*lex animata in terris*), encapsulates the Ghibelline claim: like the pope, the empire must be recognized as an institution sacred in nature and character. Evola emphasizes that the opposition between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines "was not only political . . . it expressed the antagonism of two great *dignitates*, both claiming a spiritual dimension . . . . On its deepest level, Ghibellinism held that during his life on earth (seen as discipline, combat and service) the individual could transcend himself . . . by means of action and under the sign of the empire, in accordance with the character of the 'supernatural' institution which was granted to it"[4]

From here on, the decline of the empire throughout the centuries is consistent with the decline of the central role played by its *principle* and, correspondingly, with its movement toward a purely territorial definition. The Germanic Roman empire had already changed when the

4. *Les Hommes au Milieu des Ruines* (Paris: Sept Couleurs, 1972) p. 141.

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attempt was made in both Italy and Germany to link it to a privileged territory. This idea is still absent in Dante, for whom the emperor is neither German nor Italian but "Roman" in the spiritual sense, i.e., a successor of Caesar and Augustus. In other words, the empire cannot transform itself into a "great nation" without collapsing because, in terms of the principle which animates it, no nation can assume and exercise a superior ruling function if it does not rise above its allegiances and its particular interests. "The empire in the true sense," Evola concludes, "can only exist if animated by a spiritual fervor . . . If this is lacking, one will only have a creation forged by violence — imperialism — a simple mechanical superstructure without a soul."[5]

For its part, the nation finds its origin in the pretension that the kingdom has to give itself imperial prerogatives by relating them not to a principle but a territory. Its beginnings can be located in the division of the Carolingian empire following the Verdun Treaty. At that point France and Germany, if one can call them that, began to have separate destinies. The latter remained in the imperial tradition, whereas the kingdom of the Franks (*Regnum Francorum*), seceding from the Germanic community, slowly evolved toward the modern nation by the intermediary of the monarchical state. The end of the Carolingian dynasty dates from the 10th century: 911 in Germany, 987 in France. Elected in 987, Hughes Capet was the first king who did not understand *francique*. He was also the first sovereign who situated himself clearly outside the imperial tradition, which explains why, in the *Divine Comedy*, Dante has him say: "I was the malignant root whose shade darkened all Christian land!"

In the 13th and 14th centuries, the kingdom of France was constructed against the empire with Philippe-Auguste (Bouvines, 1214) and Philippe le Bel (Agnani, 1303). As early as 1204, Pope Innocent III declared that "it is publicly known that the king of France does not recognize any authority above him in the temporal realm." Just as the Trojan legend was instrumentalized, an entire work of "ideological" legitimation allowed the empire to be opposed to the principle of sovereignty of national kingdoms and their right to recognize no law other than their own interest. The role of jurists, emphasized so well by Carl Schmitt, is fundamental here. In the mid-13th century they were the ones who formulated the doctrine according to which "the king of France, who does not see anyone above him in the temporal realm, is

5. *Essais Politiques* (Puiseaux: Pards, 1988) p. 86.

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exempt from the empire and may be considered as a *princeps in regno suo*."[6] This doctrine was further developed in the 14th and 15th centuries with Pierre Dubois and Guillaume de Nogaret. By proclaiming himself "emperor in his own realm" (*rex imperator in regno suo*), the king opposed his territorial sovereignty to the spiritual sovereignty of the empire — his purely temporal power was opposed to imperial spiritual power. At the same time, jurists took the side of centralization against local life, and against the feudal aristocracies, thanks especially to the institution of the "*cas royal*." They founded a juridical order, bourgeois in character, in which the law — conceived as a general norm with rational attributes — became the basis of a purely statist power. Law was transformed into simple legality codified by the state. In the 16th century, the formula of the king as "emperor in his own realm" was directly associated with the idea of sovereignty, about which Jean Bodin theorized. Schmitt remarks that France was the first country in the world to create a public order completely emancipated from the medieval model.

What happened next is well known. In France the nation came into being under the double sign of centralizing absolutism and the rise of the bourgeoisie. Here the main role fell on the state. When Louis XIV said "*L'Etat c'est moi*," he meant there was nothing above the state. The state creates the nation, which in turn "produces" the French people; whereas in the modern age and in countries with an imperial tradition, the people create the nation, which then creates a state. The two processes of historical construction are thus entirely opposed and this opposition is based on the difference between the nation and the empire. As has often been pointed out, the history of France has been a constant struggle against the empire. The secular politics of the French monarchy was primarily aimed at breaking up Germanic and Italian spaces. After 1792, the republic took up the same objectives: the struggle against the house of Austria and the conquest of the Rhine.

The opposition between the spiritual principle and the territorial power is not the only one. Another essential difference concerns the way in which the empire and the nation regard political unity. The unity of the empire was not mechanical but organic, which goes beyond the state. To the degree to which it embodies a principle, the empire only envisages a unity on the level of that principle. Whereas the nation engenders its own culture or finds support in culture in the process of its formation, the empire embraces various cultures. Whereas the nation

6. Robert Folz, *Le Coronnement Impérial de Charlemagne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

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tries to make the people and the state correspond, the empire associates different peoples.

The principle of empire tries to reconcile the one and the many, the particular and the universal. Its general law is that of autonomy and of the respect for diversity. The empire tries to unify on a higher level, without suppressing the diversity of cultures, ethnic characters and peoples. It is a whole whose parts are autonomous in proportion to the solidity of what unites them. These parts are differentiated and organic. In contrast to the unitary and centralized *societas* of the national kingdom, the empire embodies the clasical image of *universitas*. Moeller van den Bruck rightly saw the empire as a unity of opposites, while Evola defined it as "a supranational organisation such that its unity does not tend to destroy or to level the ethnic and cultural multiplicity it embraces,"[7] adding that the imperial principle makes it possible "to retreat from the multiplicity of diverse elements to a principle which is at once higher and prior to their differentiation — a differentiation which proceeds only from sensible reality." So it is not a question of abolishing but of integrating difference.

At the height of the Roman Empire, Rome was an idea, a principle, which made it possible to unite different peoples without converting or suppressing them. The principle of *imperium*, which was already at work in republican Rome, reflected the will to realize an always threatened cosmic order. The Roman Empire did not require jealous gods. It admitted other divinities, known or unknown, and the same is the case in the political order. The empire accepted foreign cults and the diversity of juridical codes. Each people was free to organize its federation in terms of its traditional concept of law. The Roman *jus* prevailed only in relations between individuals of different peoples or in relations between federations. One could be a Roman citizen (*civis romanus sum*) without abandoning one's nationality.

This distinction (foreign to the spirit of the nation) between what today is called *nationality* and *citizenship* can be found in the Germanic Roman Empire. The medieval Reich, a supra-national institution (because *animated* by a principle beyond the political order), was fundamentally pluralist. It allowed people to live their own lives according to their own law. In modern language, it was characterized by a marked "federalism" particularly able to respect minorities. After all, the Austro-Hungarian empire functioned efficiently for centuries while minorities

7. *Essais Politiques*, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

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began to constitute most of its population (60% of the total). It brought together Italians and Romanians, as well as Jews, Serbs, Russians, Germans, Poles, Czechs, Croats and Hungarians. Jean Branger writes that "the Hapsburgs were always indifferent to the concept of nation-state," even to the point where this empire, founded by the house of Austria, for many centuries refused to create an "Austrian nation," which really only took shape in the 20th century.[8]

Conversely, what characterizes the national realm is its irresistible tendency to centralization and homogenization. The nation-state's investment of space is first revealed in a territory on which an homogeneous political sovereignty is exercised. This homogeneity may at first be apprehended in law: territorial unity results from the uniformity of juridical norms. The monarchy's secular struggle against the feudal nobility, especially under Louis XI, the annihilation of the civilizations of countries where the *langue d'oc* was spoken, the affirmation of the principle of centralization under Richelieu, all tended in the same direction. In this respect, the 14th and 15th centuries marked a fundamental shift. During this period the state emerged as the victor against feudal aristocracies and ensured its alliance with the bourgeoisie at the same time as a centralized juridical order was put in place. Simultaneously, the "national" economic *market* appeared. Thanks to a monetarization of all forms of exchange (non-commercial, intra-community exchanges being untaxable before then), it responded to the will of the state to maximize its fiscal revenues. As Pierre Rosanvallon explains: "the nation-state is a way of composing and articulating global space. In the same way, the market is primarily a way of representing and structuring social space; only secondarily is it a decentralized mechanism for regulating economic activity through the price system. From this perspective, the nation-state and the market refer to the same form of socialization of individuals within space. They are conceivable only in an atomized society in which the individual is considered autonomous. In both the sociological and economic senses of these terms, a nation-state and a market cannot exist in spaces where society unfolds as a global and social entity."[9]

There is no doubt that monarchial absolutism paved the way for bourgeois national revolutions. After Louis XIV had broken the nobility's last resistances, the revolution was inevitable when the bourgeoisie could in turn win its autonomy. But there is also no doubt that in

8. *Histoire de l'Empire des Habsbourg 1273-1918* (Paris: Fayard, 1990).
9. *Le Libéralisme Économique: Histoire de l'Idée de Marché* (Paris: Seuil, 1989) p. 124.

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many respects the revolution only carried out and accelerated the tendencies of the *Ancien Régime*. Thus Tocqueville wrote: "The French Revolution caused many subordinate and secondary things, but it really only developed the core of the most important things; these existed before it . . . . With the French, the central power had already taken over local administration more than any other country in the world. The revolution only made this power more skilful, powerful, enterprising."[10]

Under the monarchy, as under the republic, the "national" logic tried to eliminate anything that might interfere between the state and the individual. It tried to integrate individuals to the same laws in a unified fashion; it did not attempt to bring together collectivities free to preserve their language, cultures and laws. State power was exercised over individual subjects, which was why it constantly destroyed or limited the power of all forms of intermediate socialization: familial clans, village communities, confraternities, trades, etc. The 1791 law against corporations (*loi Le Chapelier*) thus found its precedent in Francis I's suppression of "all confraternities of trades and artisans in the whole kingdom" in 1539 — a decision which at that time targeted those artisans [*Compagnons*] belonging to societies said to be of duty. With the revolution, of course, this trend accelerated. The restructuring of the territory into departments of more or less equal size, the fight against "the provincial spirit," the suppression of particularities, the offensive against regional languages and "*patois*," the standardization of weights and measures, represent a real obsession with bringing everything into alignment. In terms of Ferdinand Tönnies' old distinction, the modern nation emerges when society rises on the ruins of old communities.

This individualist component of the nation-state is essential here. The empire requires the preservation of the diversity of groups; by its very logic, the nation recognizes only individuals. One is a member of the empire in a *mediated* fashion through intermediary structures. Conversely, one belongs to the nation in an immediate way, i.e., without the mediation of local ties, bodies or states. Monarchial centralization was essentially juridical and political; it thereby pointed to the work of constructing the state. Revolutionary centralization, which accompanied the emergence of the modern nation, went further still. It aimed at "producing the nation" directly, i.e., at engendering new social modes of behavior. The state then became *productive of the social*, a

10. *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) p. 65. (First edition 1856).

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monopolistic producer: it attempted to establish a society of individuals recognized as equal on a secular level, on the ruins of the intermediate bodies it had suppressed[11]

As Jean Baechler points out, "in the nation the intermediate groups are seen as irrelevant with respect to the citizenry and so tend to become secondary and subordinated."[12] Louis Dumont argues along similar lines, that nationalism results from transferring the subjectivity characteristic of individualism to the level of an abstract collectivity. "In the most precise, modern, sense of the term, 'nation' and 'nationalism' (distinguished from simple patriotism) have historically been part and parcel of individualism as a value. The nation is just a type of global society which corresponds to the reign of individualism as a value. Not only does the nation accompany individualism historically, the interdependence between them is so indispensable that one could say the nation is a global society composed of people who consider themselves individuals."[13]

This individualism, woven within the logic of the nation, is obviously opposed to the *holism* of imperial construction, where the individual is not dissociated from his natural connections. In the empire the same citizenry is composed of different nationalities. In the nation the two terms are synonyms: belonging to a nation is the foundation for citizenship. Pierre Fougeyrollas summarizes the situation in these terms: "Breaking with medieval societies which had a bipolar identity — that of ethnic roots and of the community of believers — modern nations are constituted as closed societies where the only official identity is that which the state confers on citizens. Thus in terms of its birth and foundations, the nation has been an *anti-empire*. The Netherlands originated in a break with the Hapsburg Empire; England originated in a break with Rome and the establishment of a national religion. Spain only became Castillian by escaping from the grasp of the Hapsburg system, and France, which was slowly constituted as a nation against the Germanic Roman Empire, only became a nation by combating traditional forces in all of Europe."[14]

The empire is never a closed totality, as opposed to the nation, which has been increasingly defined by intangible boundaries. The empire's frontiers are naturally fluid and provisional, which reinforces

11. Cf. Pierre Rosanvallon, *L'Etat en France de 1789 à Nos Jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1990).
12. "Déperissement de la Nation?" in *Commentaire* (Spring, 1988) p. 104.
13. *Essais sur l'Individualisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1983) pp. 20-1.
14. *La Nation: Essor et Déclin des Sociétés modernes*, (Paris: Fayard, 1987) p. 231.

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its organic character. Originally the word "frontier" had an exclusively military meaning: the front line. At the beginning of the 14th century, under the reign of Louis X the Hutin in France, the word "*frontière*" replaced "*marche*," which had commonly been used up to then. But it would still take four centuries before it acquired its current meaning of delimitation between two states. Contrary to legend, the idea of a "natural frontier," which jurists sometimes used in the 15th century, never inspired the external politics of the monarchy. Its origin is sometimes wrongly attributed to Richelieu, or even to Vauban. In fact, only during the revolution was this idea, according to which the French nation would have "natural frontiers," used systematically. Under the Convention especially, the Girodins used it to legitimate the establishment of the eastern frontier on the left bank of the Rhine and, more generally, to justify their annexation policies. It is also during the revolution that the Jacobin idea that the frontiers of a state have to correspond both to those of a language, a political authority and a nation begins to spread everywhere in Europe. Finally, it is the Convention which invented the notion of the "foreigner within" (of which Charles Maurras was paradoxically to make great use) by applying it to aristocrats who supported a despised political system: by defining them as "strangers in our midst," Barrère asserts that "aristocrats have no country."

Even with its universal principle and vocation, the empire is not universalist in the current sense of the term. Its universality never meant expansion across the whole earth. Instead, it was connected to the idea of an equitable order seeking to federate peoples on the basis of a concrete political organization. From this viewpoint, the empire, which rejects any aim of conversion or standardization, differs from a hypothetical world-state or from the idea that there are juridico-political principles universally valid at all times and in all places.

Since universalism is directly linked to individualism, modern political universalism must be conceived in terms of the individualist roots of the nation-state. Historical experience shows that nationalism often takes the form of a ethnocentrism blown up to universal dimensions. On many occasions the French nation wanted to be "the most universal of nations," and it is from the universality of its national model that it claimed to derive its right to disseminate its principles throughout the world. At the time when France wanted to be "the older sister of the Church," the monk Guibert de Nogent, in his *Dei per Francos*, made the Franks the instrument of God. From 1792 on, revolutionary imperialism also tried to convert all of Europe to the idea of the nation-state. Since

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then, there has been no lack of voices authorized to ensure that the French idea of nation is ordered to that of humanity, and that this is what would make it particularly "tolerant." One can question this pretension since the proposition can be inverted: if the nation is ordered to humanity, it is because humanity is ordered to the nation. With this corollary, those opposed to it are excluded not only from a particular nation but from the human species in its entirety.

The word *empire* should be reserved only for the historical constructions deserving this name, such as the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Germanic Roman Empire or the Ottoman Empire. The Napoleonic empire, Hitler's Third Reich, the French and British colonial empires, and modern imperialisms of the American and Soviet types are certainly not empires. Such a designation is only abusively given to enterprises or powers merely engaged in expanding their national territory. These modern "great powers" are not empires but rather nations which simply want to expand, by military, political, economic or other conquest beyond their current frontiers.

In the Napoleonic era the "empire" (a term already used to designate the monarchy before 1789, but simply in the sense of "state") was a national-statist entity attempting to assert itself in Europe as a great hegemonic power. Bismarck's empire, which gave priority to the state, also attempted to create the German nation. Alexandre Kojève observed that "Hitler's slogan: *Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer* is only a (bad) German translation of the nationalistic watchword of the French Revolution: *la République une et indivisible*. The Third Reich's hostility to the idea of empire is also visible in its critique of the ideology of intermediate bodies and "estates."[15] A centralist and reductive vision always prevailed in the Soviet "empire," implying a unified politico-economic space thanks to a restrictive concept of local cultural rights. As for the American "model," which tries to convert the whole world into a homogeneous system of material consumption and techno-economic practices, it is difficult to see what *idea*, what spiritual principle, it could claim!

"Great powers" are not really empires. In fact, modern imperialisms should be challenged in the name of what an empire truly is. Evola thought no differently when he wrote: "Without a *Meurs et deviens*, no nation can aspire to an effective and legitimate imperial mission. It is not possible to retain one's national characteristics and

15. Cf. Justus Beyer, *Die Ständeideologien der Systemzeit und ihre Überwindung* (Darmstadt, 1942).

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then to desire, on this basis, to dominate the world or simply another place,"[16] And again: "If the 'imperialist' tendencies of the modern age have been abortive because they often accelerate the downfall of the peoples who give in to them, or if they have been the source of all kinds of calamities, this is precisely because they lack any really spiritual — supra-political and supra-national — element; the latter is replaced by the violence of a power which is greater than the one it wants to subjugate but which is not of a different nature. If an empire is not a *holy* empire, it is not an empire but a kind of cancer attacking all the distinctive functions of a living organism."[17]

Why think at all about the concept of empire today? Is it not purely chimerical to call for the rebirth of a true empire? Perhaps. But is it an accident if, even today, the model of the Roman Empire has continued to inspire all attempts to go beyond the nation-state? Is it an accident if the idea of empire (the *Reichsgedanke*) still mobilizes reflection at a time when thought is in disarray?[18] And is it not this idea of empire which underlies all the debates currently surrounding the construction of Europe?

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16. *Essais Politiques*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

17. *Révolte Contre le Monde Moderne*, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

18. During the Weimar Republic, there was a real growth in publications concerning the idea of empire and of "thinking about the Reich" (*Reichsgedanke*). On this subject, see Fritz Büchner, ed., *Was ist das Reich? Eine Aussprache unter Deutschen* (Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling, 1932); Herbert Krüger, "Der Moderne Reichsgedanke," in *Die Tat* (December 1933) pp. 703-15 and (January 1934) pp. 795-804; Edmund Schopen, *Geschichte der Reichsidee*, 8 Volumes, (Munich: Carl Röhrig, 1936); Peter Richard Rohden, *Die Idee des Reiches in der Europäischen Geschichte* (Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling, 1943); Paul Goedecke, *Der Reichsgedanke im Schriftum von 1919 bis 1935* (Marburg: Doctoral thesis, 1951). The authors dealing with this subject often disagree about the meaning of the idea of empire and about the relation between the medieval Germanic Reich and the Roman *imperium*. In Catholic circles, the apology for empire often expresses nostalgia for the medieval Christian unity before the religious wars. The concept of the Reich as a "Holy Alliance" or as a "sacramental reality" frequently points to romanticism (Novalis, Adam Müller) but also to Constantin Franz. In other respects, the idea of a "third empire" carries chiliastic representations from the end of the Middle Ages (Joachim of Fiore's announcement of the Reign of the Spirit). On the Protestant side, one finds the "Reich theologies," especially in Friedrich Gogarten's *Politische Ethik* (Berlin, 1931), Wilhelm Stapel's *Der Christliche Staatsmann: Eine Theologie der Nationalismus* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1932) or Friedrich Hielscher's *Das Reich* (Berlin: Reich, 1931), but from a different perspective. In Stapel, the main idea is that of a national Reich having its own "*nomos*" with a pronounced pluri-ethnic character but sanctifying German hegemony. See his reply to the supporters of the Catholic Reich, "Der Reichsgedanke zwischen den Konfessionen," in *Deutsches Volkstum*, (November 15, 1932) pp. 909-16. In Moeller van den Bruck, this secularized and strictly German concept of empire is stressed even more. Very critical of the Holy Roman Empire, Moeller accuses Staufen of having been taken in by the "Italian mirage," and of wanting to make the *imperium romanum* (the "periphery") live again rather than

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Is the nation-state irreplaceable? Many on the Left and on the Right have said so. This is, notably, Charles Maurras' viewpoint. According to him, the nation is "the biggest of the temporally solid and complete communitarian circles"[19] He taught that "there is no political framework larger than the nation."[20] Thierry Maulnier replied: "The cult of the nation is not in itself a response but a refuge, a mystifying effusion, or worse still, a redoubtable diversion from internal problems."[21]

What basically moves the world today is beyond the nation-state. The latter finds its framework for action, its sphere of decision-making, torn apart by many ruptures. The nation is challenged both from above and below. It is challenged from below by new social movements: by the persistence of regionalisms and new communitarian claims. It is as if the intermediate forms of socialization which it once did away with were born again today in new forms. The divorce between civil society and the political class is reflected in the proliferation of networks and the multiplication of "tribes." But the nation is also challenged from above by often weighty social phenomena which mock national frontiers. The nation-state is stripped of its powers by the world market and international competition, by the formation of supranational or communitarian institutions, by intergovernmental bureaucracies, techno-scientific apparati, global media messages or international pressure groups. At the same time, there is the increasingly distinct external expansion of national economies at the expense of internal markets. The economy is becoming globalized because of interacting forces, multinationals, the stock-exchange, global macro-organizations.

The imagery of nations also seems to be in crisis and those who talk

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trying to unify the German people (the "center"). This is the reason for his strange sympathy with the Guelphs and for his preference for the *Deutsches Reich deutscher Nation* as opposed to the *Heiliges römisches Reich*.

After 1933, the discussion concerning the idea of Reich (*Reichsidee*) was carried on outside official circles. For Carl Schmitt, the notion of empire is the central representation of a new right-wing political order of peoples associated with the notion of "great space" (*Grossraum*) — an idea which was strongly criticized by the supporters of a purely German and *völkisches* notion of empire. These supporters saw in the Reich the organizing force for a "living space" grounded in the "biological" substance of the German peoples. This argument is made by Reinhard Höhn ("Grossraumordnung und völkisches Rechtsdenken: in *Reich, Volksordung, Lebensraum*, 1943, pp. 216-352). See also Karl Richard Ganzer, *Das Reich als europäische Ordnungsmacht*, (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1941-2); and Oswald Torsten, *Riche: Eine Geschichtliche Studie ber die Entwicklung der Reichsidee* (Munich and Berlin: R. Oldenburg, 1943).

19. *Mes Idées Politiques*, (Albatros, 1983) p. 281.
20. *Enquête sur la Monarchie 1900-1909,* 1st ed. (Nlle Libr. Nationale, 1909) p. XIII.
21. *Au-delà du Nationalisme*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

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of "national identity" are generally hard-pressed to define it. The national model of *integration* seems to be exhausted. The evolution of politics toward a system of techno-managerial authorities, which brings to fruition the implosion of political reality, confirms that the logic of nations is no longer able to integrate anyone or to assure the regulation of relations between a state criticized on all fronts and a civil society which is breaking apart. So the nation is confronted with the growth of certain collective or communitarian identities at the very moment when global centers of decision-making paint a gloomy picture above it. Daniel Bell expressed this when he said that nation-states have become too big for little problems and too little for the big ones. Deprived of any real historical foundation, in the Third World the nation-state seems to be a Western import. The long-term viability of, e.g., black African or near Eastern "nations," seems increasingly uncertain. In fact these nations are the result of a series of arbitrary decisions by colonial powers profoundly ignorant of local historical, religious and cultural realities. The dismantling of the Ottoman and of the Austro-Hungarian empires as a result of the Sèvres and Versailles treaties was a catastrophe whose effects are still felt today — as the Gulf War and renewed conflicts in Central Europe show.

In such conditions, how can the idea of empire be ignored? Today it is the only model Europe has produced as an alternative to the nation-state. Nations are both threatened and exhausted. They must go beyond themselves if they do not want to end up as dominions of the American superpower.They can only do so by attempting to reconcile the one and the many, seeking a unity that does not lead to their impoverishment. There are unmistakable signs of this. The fascination with Austria-Hungary and the rebirth of the idea of *Mitteleuropa*[22] are among them. The *call for empire* will be born of necessity. The work Kojève wrote in 1945, only recently published, is remarkable. In it he makes a fervent appeal for the formation of a "Latin empire" and posits the necessity of empire as an alternative to the nation-state and to abstract universality. "Liberalism," he wrote, "is wrong to see no political entity beyond the nation. Internationalism sins because it can see nothing politically viable beyond humanity. It too was incapable of discovering the intermediate political reality of empires, i.e., of unions, even international fusions, of *related nations*, which is today's very political reality."[23]

22. Cf. Karlheinz Weissmann, "Das Herz des Kontinents: Reichsgedanke und Mitteleuropa-Idee," in *Mut* (January, 1987) pp. 24-35.

23. "L'Empire Latin," in *La Règle du Jeu* (May 1, 1990) p. 94.

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In order to create itself Europe requires a unity of political decision-making. But this European political unity cannot be built on the national Jacobin model if it does not want to see the richness and diversity of all European components disappear. It can also not result from the economic supra-nationality dreamt by Brussels technocrats. Europe can only create itself in terms of a federal model, but a federal model which is the vehicle for an idea, a project, a principle, i.e., in the final analysis, an *imperial* model. Such a model would make it possible to solve problems of regional cultures, ethnic minorities and local autonomies, which will not find a true solution within the framework of the nation-state. It would also make it possible to rethink the whole problem of relations between citizenship and nationality in light of certain problems arising from recent immigration. It would allow one to understand the resurgent dangers of ethno-linguistic irredentism and Jacobin racism. Finally, because of the important place it gives to the idea of *autonomy*, it would make room for grass-roots democratic procedures and direct democracy. Imperial principle above, direct democracy below: this is what would renew an old tradition!

Today there is a lot of talk about a new world order, and one is certainly necessary. But under what banner will it take shape? The banner of man-machine, of the "computer-man," or under the banner of a diversified organization of living peoples? Will the earth be reduced to something homogeneous because of deculturalizing and depersonalizing trends for which American imperialism is now the most cynical and arrogant vector? Or will people find the means for the necessary resistance in their beliefs, traditions, and ways of seeing the world? This is really the decisive question that has been raised at the beginning of the next millennium.

Whoever says federation, says federalist principle. Whoever says empire, says imperial principle. Today this idea does not seem to appear anywhere. Yet it is written in history. It is an idea which has yet to find its form. But it has a past and a future. It is also a matter of making an origin clear. At the time of the Hundred Years War, Louis d'Estouteville's motto was" "Where honor is, where loyalty is, there lies my country." We have our nationality and we are proud of it. But it is also possible to be citizens of an idea in the imperial tradition. This is what Evola argues: "The idea alone should represent the country . . . It is not the fact of belonging to the same soil, speaking the same language, or having the same bloodline which should unite or divide us, but the fact of

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supporting or not supporting the same idea."[24] This does not mean that roots are unimportant. On the contrary, they are essential. It only means that everything must be put into perspective. This is the whole difference between origin as a *principle* and origin as pure subjectivity. Only origin conceived as a principle makes it possible to defend the cause of peoples, of all peoples, and to understand that, far from being a threat to one's own identity, the identity of others in fact plays a role in what allows one to defend one's respective identity against a global system which tries to destroy them. It is necessary to affirm the superiority of the idea which preserves diversity for everyone's benefit. It is necessary to assert the value of the imperial principle.

24. *Les Hommes au Milieu des Ruines*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

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Générations et mémoire

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*From Race to Culture: The New Right's View of European Identity**

Pierre-André Taguieff

> It is no accident that most of the representatives of "European religion" also became defenders of liberty and positive tolerance.
>
> *Alain de Benoist*

> Two thousand years of fleeing from its own identity led the West to the illusion that it was possible to remake an identity using great "universal" principles which it then had the right to impose on the rest of the known world.
>
> *Alain de Benoist*

The New Right: Evolution of a Doctrine

Since 1978 the label "New Right" has generally referred to the *Groupement de Recherche et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne* (GRECE), founded in 1968. Nevertheless, the New Right may also refer to one of the ideological and political currents which appeared on the French scene in the 1970s — one of the "new" ideologies of the Right or, more precisely, one of the new doctrinal syntheses whose objective is to reorient political life. Irrespective of later political associations, three ideological traditions can be distinguished, each of which can

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in turn be divided into "schools of thought" or intellectual orientations: first, traditional counter-revolutionaries (legitimism and/or "integralism"), integral nationalism in the tradition of Charles Maurras and Gnostic inclinations allied to [René] Guénon or [Julius] Evola; second, Europeanist conservative revolutionaries who are partisans of a "third way" (revolutionary nationalists, neo-fascists, and neo-pagans associated with GRECE); and third, neo-conservatives of a "liberal" stripe (the national liberalism of the Club de l'Horloge such as the "new republican, liberal national populism," the "popular capitalism" of the National Front, the anti-state libertarians, and the "new economists"). Clearly all of them can be distinguished in terms of their relation to economic liberalism. Counter-revolutionary traditionalists and conservative revolutionaries include all of the Right's anti-liberal schools and confront the many liberal neo-conservative schools.

Until 1979 the label "New Right" could be applied to both GRECE (the "metapolitical" or "cultural" wing) and the Club de l'Horloge (the main political wing founded in 1974 by at least two members of GRECE, Yvan Blot and J.-Y. Gallou). Thereafter, the Club's unconditional allegiance to economic liberalism and the Western Alliance caused it to break with GRECE — a break exacerbated by the latter's turn against the West between 1975 and 1980. A common rejection of egalitarian ideology could no longer hide profound differences: on the one side, anti-communism, pro-Americanism, moral conservatism, liberalism, and a return to traditional Catholicism; on the other, a trenchant anti-Americanism, reformulating the old refrain "Neither Washington nor Moscow" — the attempt to find a "third way,""organic democracy,"[1] anti-liberalism and anti-economism, postmodernism and a "right-wing" pro-Third World stance, the reaffirmation of paganism and the unconditional rejection of "Judeo-Christianity."[2] Thus we should reserve the label "New Right" for GRECE alone. Owing to its refusal to compromise on the question of universalism — it denounced the "ideology of human rights" — and its rejection of liberal concepts in the 1980s when neo-liberalism and humanitarianism were riding high, GRECE was marginalized on the French ideological and political scene.[3] However, it did not thereby lose its international audience because the untimely firmness of its anti-economic and anti-universal positions were in line with the movements on the Left that challenged dominant utilitarian and humanitarian ideas.[4]

The appearance on the "Right" of a "new pro-Third World stance," based on the defense of peoples against Western economic and humanitarian imperialism,[5] would seem to indicate the political orientation required of any attempt to

1. Alain de Benoist, *Orientations pour des Années Décisives* (Paris: Le Labyrinthe, 1982) and *Démocratie: Le problème* (Paris: Le Labyrinthe, 1985).
2. Alain de Benoist (in collaboration with Thomas Molnar), *L'eclipse du Sacré* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1986).
3. See Alain de Benoist, *Europe, Tiers Monde, Même Combat* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1986).
4. Cf. *Bulletin du M.A.U.S.S.*, No. 20 (December, 1986).
5. Benoist, *Europe, Tiers Monde, Même Combat*, *op. cit.*

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find a "third way." But such a stance is not without its ambiguities. For example, non-European immigrants are to be returned to their home countries under the pretext of the right "to difference" and respect for cultural identities. But the logical consequence of making "cultural" differences absolute is the call to exclude foreigners considered "undesirable" because they cannot be assimilated. Claiming that "multiracial society is the breeding ground of racism," Guillaume Faye defines the third way (between racism and anti-racism) as follows: "To go to the heart of the right to difference, one must reject multiracial societies and concur with the immigrants themselves that they be returned to their own countries."[6]

In my view, this statement illustrates the appearance of a *differentialist racism* — a racism no longer *heterophobic* but *heterophile* in its arguments and themes. Presenting itself as an "authentic" anti-racism, this neo-racism has two other major characteristics. On the one hand, its ideological parameters are no longer defined in terms of inequality — a fixed universal scale of values, a concern for status, an obsession with hereditary defects and with the rise of "inferior" peoples — but in terms of the distance between "cultural" communities. It postulates a radical heterogeneity between "mental" ("cultural") traditions. Affirming differences provides the pretext for affirming the *incommensurability* of different cultures (absolute cultural relativism). On the other hand, this "cultural" racism moves from the idea of zoological races (physical anthropology) to that of ethnicity and "culture" (social or cultural anthropology) where some positions held by the ethnological community can be legitimated.[7]

The differentialist imagination wants to preserve collective identities (and inter-communitarian differences) at all costs. It is haunted by the threat of the destruction of identities through inter-breeding — physical and cultural cross-breeding. This is the "mixophobic" core of differentialist racism. Moreover, the right to difference is presented as the most effective ideological weapon against "all totalitarianisms."[8] Apart from its anti-racism and its pro-Third World stance, it is therefore also anti-totalitarian. The strategic intelligence of the New Right excels in opposing the ideas and positions of its adversary — the hegemonic intellectual Left — by recovering, diverting and reversing them. The danger in this is that the New Right will be unable to distinguish itself from the Left and will thereby lose its ideological particularity. Owing to the subtlety of its reaction and response, it also risks aligning itself with the very positions of its adversary which it tries to distort and disarm.

Despite a nucleus of common and recurrent convictions and positions — the rejection of egalitarianism, of liberal and Marxist economics, of "Judeo-Christianity," and its defence of the cultural identity of Europe and the goal of

6. Cf. *Éléments*, Nos. 48-49 (Winter 1983/84), pp. 73 and 76. Cf. also Guillaume Faye, *Les Nouveaux Enjuex Idéoloques* (Paris: Le Labyrinthe, 1985).
7. Cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le Regard Eloigné* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1983).
8. Cf. *Éléments*, No. 33 (February-March 1980).

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a "third empire" — one cannot attribute to GRECE an ideological homogeneity it seems it never had.[9] Since 1980/81, it has been possible to distinguish five different, even divergent positions within the team of directors at GRECE. These positions are reflected more obviously in its sphere of influence and especially among its sympathizers. The first is found in the traditional anti-modern faction comprised of the supporters of Guénon and Evola; the second, in the nostalgic, communitarian, romantic and reactionary *völkisch* faction that is openly nationalistic (either for France or Europe); the third is located in the anti-Judeo-Christian faction that is neo-pagan, ethno-pluralist, Europeanist and pro-Third World (integrating Georges Dumézil and Louis Dumont and then Martin Heidegger into its scientific system of legitimation);[10] fourth, the postmodern, anti-Judeo-Christian faction which has imperialist aims (Europe as the third empire),[11] a "Faustian" and pluralist — differentialist — interpretation of techno-science as a dehomogenizing force[12], and which celebrates the power of "disinstallation" and metamorphosis attributed exclusively to "European identity"; and finally, the scientific faction that is either positivistic or neo-gnostic. On the most charitable interpretation, the doctrine of the New Right appears to be very heterogeneous, pluralist and diverse; on the most pessimistic, it appears to be on the verge of disintegration.

After a period of stabilization and relative doctrinal unity (1972-73/1979-80), the New Right entered a period of uncertainty and attempted to redefine both its intellectual and cultural foundations as well as its orientations and political objectives. It is useful to mention briefly the four doctrinal phases which have characterized GRECE's evolution since its inception.

1) When the body of the doctrine was formulated, inequality — inter-individual, inter-genetic — and genetic determinism — the spread of psychological notions of hereditary intelligence as well as research in physical anthropology and "scientific" raciology — were emphasized. An explicitly biological racism and scientism characterized this first doctrinal stage, which can mainly be found in the tradition of "biological realism" in the "Message from Upsala" (1958-60) and in *Europe Action* (1962-67). Thereafter, the main enemy clearly became Marxism-Leninism and the communist movement (1968-72).

2) When the doctrine solidified, the accent was on the idea of the elite, the diversity of mental types and the misdeeds of "Judeo-Christianity" in the history of Europe (1972/1978-79). A specific doctrine of anti-egalitarianism and European paganism was in evidence — a doctrine of neo-aristocracy *à la* Nietzsche, articulating a more or less differentialist "anti-racism" (1975) as well as a "scientific" doctrine of European cultural identity (based on an opportunistic use of

9. This has been emphasized by Anne-Marie Duranton in her unpublished doctoral thesis (Université de Paris X-Nanterre, 1984): "Le GRECE de 1968-1984".

10. Benoist, *L'Eclipse du Sacré*, *op. cit.*

11. Guillaume Faye, *Nouveau Discours à la Nation Européenne* (Paris: Albatros, 1985).

12. Faye, *Les Nouveaux Enjuex Idéoloques*, *op. cit.*

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the works of Dumézil). Also in evidence was the beginning of a culturism of the Right, whose main enemy was the egalitarianism born of monotheism.

3) When the doctrine was readapted, cultural identities and differences were emphasized in the context of an ethno-pluralism and a radical cultural relativism (largely borrowed from the leftist intelligentsia) opposed to Western "ethnocidal" universalism. Right-wing ideas began to be eliminated; there is an insistence on the primacy of the economy, a violent protest against liberal capitalism, a denunciation of "reductionism" (including the genetic determinism of socio-biology) anti-totalitarianism, and the development of the differentialist thematic — the "cause of the people" and the "rights of the people" — in opposition to human rights — a system of abstractions serving Western imperialism. The main enemy again changed and assumed the unexpected shape of the US — Westernism, Americanism, Atlanticism, universalism, liberal cosmopolitanism, the ideology of the market.[13] These are the names of the new anathema.

4) Taking into account only the works of Benoist and Faye, the period between 1984 and 1987 signaled a second doctrinal fixation centered on a differentialist pro-Third World stance, a postmodernism "of the Right," and the rediscovery of the "sacred" as the basis of a "deeply rooted" European identity. Despite its many tendencies and the loss of consensus (at the top levels and in its spheres of influence), the New Right found a new orientation — the defence of identities and of rootedness, respect for absolute differences in opposition to "advocates of a decline of humanity"[14] and to American-Soviet domination. The New Right presented itself as the party of diversity and tolerance in opposition to the party of imperial uniformity and the deculturation of peoples. The grandiose metapolitical goal was "to keep all cultures alive, . . . to attempt to preserve the diversity of the world."[15] Although this goal may appeal to many people of all persuasions today, the idea of allying a (free) Europe with an (emancipated) Third World against the two blocs, even if it has the advantage of giving political content to the important idea of a "third way" — other than social democracy — runs the risk of becoming an abstract utopia, a dream to compensate the disenchanted and the losers. This is the price of its persuasive power. By attempting to occupy the middle ground between the Left and the Right, this idea may well cause the New Right to self-destruct by eliminating all doctrinal differences. The very success of this strategy of bringing together the New Right and the New Left, pursued since 1977/78, may well spell the end of the New Right.[16] By eradicating all the theoretical and practical-strategic boundaries between itself and the Left, between anti-liberal and Third World factions, the New Right may cap its political and ideological marginalization

13. The beginning of the intermediary phase (1979-83) can be dated to the publication of Alain de Benoist's *Idées à l'Endroit* (Paris: Hallier, 1979).

14. Guillaume Faye, *Les Nouveaux Enjuex Idéoloques*, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

15. Benoist, *Europe, Tiers Monde, Même Combat*, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

16. Those who opposed this strategy rallied around the National Front. Faye broke with the New Right in 1987.

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between 1980 and 1984 by simply disappearing. This pragmatic paradox will affect the future success of its cultural or metapolitical strategy and is perhaps what makes the New Right "new."

Judeo-Christian Egalitarianism as the Main Enemy (1972-79)

After adopting the doctrine of "biological realism" (as racism was called by French neo-fascist groups in the 1950s and 1960s), and after its first soul-searching transitional period (1968-72), GRECE proceeded to formulate its first doctrinal synthesis — anti-egalitarianism based on a racial opposition to Judeo-Christianity (1972-1979). Although this doctrine was not abandoned, it was regrounded in the context of a new ideological problematic which was more permissible and acceptable in the new climate. After 1980 the Judeo-Christian argument was no longer based on the natural inequality between individuals and races but rather on the natural differences between cultures.

In an interview early in 1977, the then Secretary General of GRECE, Jean-Claude Valla, identified "egalitarianism" as the main metapolitical enemy[17] and justified his assertion by reiterating the first of the "12 points" listed in a manifesto published the same year under the title "Situations."[18] These 12 "points" are as follows: 1) Against egalitarianism; 2) Against uprooting; 3) Against intellectual terrorism; 4) Against the degradation of education; 5) Against the "exploiters of sex" and taboos; 6) Against the merchants of illusion; 7) For an organic society; 8) For European culture; 9) For a qualitative economy; 10) For a true science of man; 11) For a politics of sport; 12) For the renewal of traditions.

Valla begins with a diagnosis of the "crisis" of contemporary societies, which are especially undermined by the "deliberate subversion" of "a specific intelligentsia"[19] and characterized by "negativity in absolutely every field" — a "protest" seeking to "abolish the very foundations of our culture."[20] He explains why he denounces this "profoundly regressive project": the founders of GRECE "have confirmed [its] effects."[21] More specifically, "they have identified the *logical* connection between different kinds of protests, . . . [and] clearly discerned the common denominator underlying them;" this was their claim to fame. This common denominator is precisely what the doctrinaire New Right calls "egalitarianism," "egalitarian thinking,"[22] or "egalitarian ideology."[23]

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17. See the "Interview with Jean-Claude Valla," in *Dix Ans de Combat Culturel pour une Renaissance* (Paris: GRECE, 1977), pp. 59-80. For his arguments concerning "egalitarianism," see pp. 68-70. Reprinted by Pierre Vial as "Jean-Claude Valla: une Communauté de Travail et de Pensée," in *Pour une Renaissance Culturelle* (Paris: Copernic, 1979), pp. 30-33.
18. *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-96.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 67 and "Jean-Claude Valla," in Vial, *Pour une Renaissance Culturelle*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
20 *Ibid.*, pp. 67 and 30 respectively.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 68 and 30 respectively.
22. "Situations" in *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 83; and "Jean-Claude Valla in Vial, *Pour une Reaissance Clturelle*, *op. cit.* p. 68 and *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.* p. 31.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 68 and 30 respectively.

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The interpretation of "Against egalitarianism" in the 1977 synopsis begins as follows: "Egalitarian thought today is the common denominator of universalist doctrines and ideologies of standardization."[24] The doctrinal attribution — "ism" — poses a problem because, for GRECE, egalitarianism does not refer to a doctrine or an ideology in the strict sense. Rather, egalitarianism refers to a way of seeing the world and, more precisely, the core of a conception of the world consistent with a specific mentality that could be identified with a mental type. Hereafter, it is a way of thinking which can assume several apparently heterogeneous and even contradictory ideological or doctrinal forms in history. However, using the term in the singular indicates their "common denominator" — their common nature. Explicit in the texts of the New Right is the idea that egalitarianism is a trans-historical and meta-doctrinal mentality foreign to the European mind: "Originally, nothing was stranger to the European mind than this type of thinking —egalitarian thinking. All ancient societies were organic societies. In such societies, politics was synonymous with power relations where social relations were structured according to a certain number of hierarchies, and individuals were taken for what they are, i.e., for *persons* identical to no one else."[25]

The first reason for rejecting egalitarianism is thus that it is of foreign origin — extra-European. The first anti-egalitarianism act is therefore one of spiritual xenophobia. A second reason to reject it is that it was introduced into the European mind by "Judeo-Christianity"[26] or, more simply, just "Christianity."[27] According to Herte: "Judaism is certainly right for the Jews, as Islam is for the Arabs, and we cannot accept the racist practice of imposing our cultural model on foreign peoples."[28] Already here we find the basic argument of differentialist racism — to be anti-racist is to believe that every race, ethnic group or culture must preserve its difference at all costs. It must cultivate, develop and defend that difference against all attacks and above all not attempt to abolish it. Racism is indistinguishable from the universalization of particular values and norms; it is universalist by definition, and the demand for universality conceals imperialist goals — it is a specific form of the will to power. The demand for equality, which in modern times has been made under the universal slogan that "All men are equal," henceforth should be understood only in terms of the specific mentality of which it is an attribute. It is sufficient to apply this principle to the penetration of Judeo-Christianity into European culture: "There is no reason why Europeans should continue to model their thinking according to a religious ideology foreign to them."[29]

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24. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
25. "Situations," in *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 84; Valla, *op. cit.*, p. 68 and Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
27. Cf. "La Question Religieuse: Entretien avec Robert de Herte," in *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 199. (Benoist — a.k.a. Herte — is more willing to speak, quite prudently, of "Christianity").
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*

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The metaphor of "penetration," as well as "infiltration"[30] is used to explain how the "germs" of this foreign mentality were introduced into Europe: "Egalitarianism penetrated European culture at a critical stage at the beginning of our epoch, via the new anthropology of Judeo-Christianity."[31] Valla reiterates this assertion and explains: "After the idea of 'equality before God' was introduced into European thinking by Judeo-Christianity, egalitarian ideology was secularized in the 18th century."[32] Genealogy is essential — modern egalitarianism is presented as the product of a gradual secularization of the Christian doctrine and, more precisely, of the anthropology it presupposes. At the beginning of the Christian era: "The diversity of the world was affirmed for the first time as a *secondary* phenomenon. *Apart from* the individual characteristics which each person possesses (qualities and defects, merits and gifts, etc.), there is something *essential* which presumably makes us equal in the eyes of God."[33] Now, the history of the West is the history of the rise of egalitarianism, which, after the secularization brought about by the Enlightenment, ultimately became the dominant ideology of Western society. More precisely, it became indistinguishable from its axiological and normative core, which is the common root of all the major ideologies in apparent conflict on the political scene — liberalism, socialism, communism, anarchism. The process of secularization is progressive; "At the start, egalitarian anthropology could only be stated in theological terms — in the myth of equality before God. Thereafter, however, it gradually and inevitably became secularized. This was the case when democracy, socialism, and communism appeared on the scene, when egalitarianism was 'brought down to earth,' when a *here below* was substituted for the beyond. Now this secularization of Christian theology has come to an end. Even the Church recognizes in modern egalitarianism the child it begat long ago."[34]

The secular growth of "Judeo-Christian" egalitarianism was therefore imperialistic — it tolerated no external frontiers and hence became imperceptible: "Thereafter [after its secularization in the 18th century], the hold of this ideology on Western societies became increasingly strong. With a kind of internal momentum, it succeeded in penetrating all spheres, and today we are witnessing the result of this extraordinary flowering."[35] Monotheism and egalitarianism presuppose each other; they can be understood as synonymous — as metonymies. The one is reduced to the other and thinking becomes impoverished

30. Cf. Alain de Benoist. "Le 'Bolchévisme' de l'Antiquité," in *Les idées à l'Endroit* (Paris: Hallier, 1979), p. 170. "An oriental religion by origin and in terms of its basic characteristics (Guignebert), Christianity infiltrated ancient Europe almost surreptitiously."

31. "Situations," in *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

32. Valla in Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

33. "Situations," in *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Valla in Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 30-31; *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

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and homogenized; "Especially characteristic of egalitarian thinking is that it tends to be 'monotheistic' and *reductive*. Given that individuals are *essentially* identical (and this essential identicity [sic] is the basis of that same equality which creates their rights), egalitarianism tends to reduce everything to the Unique. It tends to eliminate the diversity of the world."[36] This is the first basic argument against "monotheistic" egalitarianism — it is accused of trying to reduce everything to one and the same thing. It is indistinguishable from imperial rule, which makes everything identical.

This argument is formulated either on an aesthetic level — the complaint about the reduction or even the elimination of the beauty of the world deriving from its diversity — or on an epistemological level — the complaint about its reductionist thinking or about its summary materialism (the systematic reduction of the superior to the inferior) — or on a bio-cosmic level. At this point the second basic argument against egalitarianism appears. It consists in opposing the presumed identitarian ideal of egalitarianism to the biological tendency to differentiation, conceived as increasing inequality, or in opposing equality in and of death to the hierarchical difference which supposedly characterizes all living things.

Valla reformulates the old romantic dichotomy between the mechanical and the organic, the inert and the vital, by introducing metaphors of entropy and negative entropy: "Now, the world is diverse. It is in fact nothing but that — diversity. All diversity generates inequalities. This is characteristic of all living systems. The evolution of living things is evolution toward increasing differentiation, toward the increasing distinction between subject and object. In other words, the great law of life is evolution toward increasing heterogeneity wherein living systems are opposed to physical systems which are themselves becoming more homogeneous and acquiring greater identity by gradually losing energy (which physicists call *entropy*). On the one hand, there are organic processes; on the other, mechanical processes. All doctrines which have as their goal the progressive egalitarianism of all living things are materialistic (with respect to macro-physics) and, whether explicitly or not, mechanistic. The logical conclusion of this tendency is decline and disappearance — the absolute homogeneity which is death itself."[37]

This long quotation is interesting because it summarizes a world view — a general onto-cosmology which grounds an ethics and a politics based on the following axiological and normative opposition: everything good favors (or moves toward) differentiation, i.e., increasing inequality; everything bad favors (or moves toward) homogenization. This is precisely the criterion which Benoist uses to define and contrapose attitudes on the Right and the Left: "By pure convention, I define the *Right* as that attitude which wants to take into consideration the *diversity* of the world. Consequently, the *relative* inequalities which

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 31 and 68 respectively.
37. Valla in Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 31; *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

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necessarily follow from it are good. The homogenization of the world extolled and fulfilled in the bi-millennial discourse of egalitarian ideology is evil."[38] The idea implicit in the final point here is crucial. If egalitarian ideology has been embodied in a "bi-millennial discourse," this is because it is clearly indistinguishable from the development of Christianity, which means that anti-egalitarianism implies anti-Christianity. Also of interest: the thesis of the radical pluralism of values implies a polylogism[39] prohibiting dialogical communication and an absolute cultural relativism (which links the inability to communicate with the incompatibility of world views) and is compatible only with the affirmation of *relative* inequalities. Differentialist racism contests the "racism" of any projection of differences or inequalities on to a single or universal scale of values.

Here we find a thematic *constant*, which recurs almost obsessively in the New Right's discourse — a pair of opposites beginning with diversity vs. uniformity that becomes a chain of equivalencies between presupposed opposites such as concrete vs. abstract, plural vs. singular (unique), particular vs. universal, etc.[40] Since 1986 GRECE, in the person of its philosopher [Benoist], has refused to situate itself in a parliamentary political topography and has also refused the label "Right."[41] It will, however, redefine itself in terms of the same system of values and norms: "Already on the international level, the major contradiction is no longer between Right and Left, liberalism and socialism, fascism and communism, 'totalitarianism' and 'democracy'. It is between those who want the world to be one-dimensional and those who support a plural world grounded in the diversity of cultures, between those who defend the cause of peoples and those who defend the rights and duties of the citizens who constitute them."[42]

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38. Alain de Benoist, "Droite: l'Ancienne et la Nouvelle," in *Les Idées à l'Endroit*, *op. cit.*, p. 58. Cf. also his "Introduction" to *Vu de Droite* (Paris, Copernic, 1977), p. 16.

39. Cf. Ludwig von Mises, *Le Gouvernement Omnipotent. De l'Etat Totalitaire à la Guerre Totale* (1944), French translation by M. de Hulster (Paris: Librairie de Medicis, 1947), pp. 411ff. Polylogism is particularly well illustrated with the racism of National Socialism: "the logical structure of the mind, they [the Nazis] said, is different depending on the nation and the race" (p. 213).

40. Cf. Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Traité de l'Argumentation* (Paris: P. U. F., 1958), Vol. II, Part 3, Chapter IV: "La Dissociation des Notions," pp. 550ff; and Chaim Perelman, *L'Empire Rhétorique* (Paris: Vrin, 1977), Chapter XI, pp. 139-150. There is no philosophical thought (and we would add, no ideological thought) which does not create or have recourse to pairs of opposed and hierarchical terms. The paradigm for this is appearance/reality. The first term is given; the second, constructed, normative and explanatory. For example: sensible/rational, body/soul, being/becoming, plurality/uniqueness, particular/general. Cf. also Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, "Les Couples Philosophiques. Une Nouvelle Approche," in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Vol. 33, Nos. 127-128 (1979), pp. 81-98.

41. See Benoist's statement, "for someone like me who has never belonged to a family of thought except in a conditional and critical way, who no more recognizes himself in the official Right than in the institutionalized Left . . . ," in *Europe, Tiers Monde, Même Combat*, *op. cit*, pp. 7-8.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

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What obviously follows from these primitive definitions and postulates is that the "enemy" cannot be identified by a particular ideology, doctrine, intellectual tradition or political tendency. The first act of all politics — the identification of the enemy — takes place here on a metapolitical level. According to Valla: "The enemy is all those doctrines and practices which represent and embody any form of egalitarianism."[43] Benoist further elaborates: "The enemy is not the 'Left', 'communism', or even 'subversion', but rather that very *egalitarian ideology* whose religious or secular, metaphysical or 'scientific' formulations have flourished for two thousand years. The 'ideas of 1789' are just a stage in this development; real subversion and communism are the inevitable result."[44]

In these transitional texts there is a double ideological and political rupture. There is a break with the anti-communist ideology which became a world view. In effect, communism is no longer the main enemy; it is only one among other forms or manifestations taken by the enemy.[45] There is also a break with the ideology of the West. Far from something to be defended at all costs, the West is defined as the product and current propagator of a process of mental colonization, even of cultural alienation, of which Europe is the victim, for which it is paying the price of its cultural identity, and from which it should free itself.

Within the sphere of the nationalist French Right, GRECE's position with respect to Marxism is the touchstone of its originality. The lack of emphasis on Marxism and communism — treated as simple effects among others — makes it possible to distinguish GRECE's polemical-logical discourse. Not without reason, GRECE also insists upon the historical or genealogical (homage to Nietzsche) aspect of its own metapolitical procedure: "Marxism did not arise from spontaneous generation. It is the *cause* of a mental degradation. But it is also the *consequence* of another cause; it was engendered by something other than itself. Our originality . . . is the 'genetic' or, if you will, the genealogical character of our procedure. We are not content with identifying the symptoms

43. Valla in Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 31; *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

44. Benoist, *Les Idées à l'Endroit*, *op. cit.*, p. 58, Cf. also Benoist, *Vu de Droite*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

45. One can certainly discern differences in tone between Valla, whose views are closer to classical anti-communism, and Benoist, who increasingly takes a "neutral" stance toward the opposition between communism and liberalism, even to the point of denying their natural difference. Valla states: "In the forefront of these [doctrines representing egalitarianism there is] of course Marxism, which is the most extreme and most terroristic form. The considerable influence of Marxism in contemporary thought today . . . is one of the main causes of the current crisis." See Valla in Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 31; *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 69. By contrast, Benoist, who since 1981-82 has continued to advance more radical positions than he took in 1974-75, now considers "American" liberal capitalism to be the main enemy. It is sufficient to note that America is the incarnation of a full-blown egalitarian ideology to see the thread that ties together GRECE's positions in its second and third periods. Cf. "L'Amérique," in *Nouvelle Ecole*, Nos. 27-28 (Fall-Winter 1975); and Alain de Benoist, "L'Ennemi Principal,"in *Éléments*, No. 41 (March-April 1982), pp. 37-40, 47-48 (reprinted in *Orientation pour des Années Décisives*, *op. cit.*).

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and their immediate causes. We attempt to trace the ultimate causes which are the true source of what many deplore today. And we say that there is no use in struggling, particularly against Marxism, if at the same time one does not have the courage and vision to struggle against the cause of Marxism — against what invariably produces Marxism, which is to say the idea, the mentality, that egalitarian 'anthropology' of which Marxism is only a result."[46] From Judeo-Christianity — the "bolshevism of antiquity" — to Marxism, there is a straight line, a transformational evolution divided by stages. It is this idea which distinguishes GRECE within the camp which identifies itself as the Right — Marxism (and/or communism) is only the ultimate effect of the "Christianization" of Europe. It is not a foreign body, a rotten fruit or a perverse reject which appeared in Western history in the 19th and 20th centuries.

What results from this "abstract" identification of the enemy as an egalitarian mentality is a redefinition of strategy. Two principles must rule the culture war, making it possible to fight effectively. First, the deep-seated causes must be eradicated: "Calling the egalitarian conception of the world into question today seems to be the *fundamental* condition for an effective struggle against negativism, reductionism and 'massification'. It is not sufficient to complain about the symptoms of decadence. One must identify their causes. Only by acting on the causes will the effects be modified completely."[47] Second, it is necessary to elaborate something like a counter-Marxism, i. e., a body of doctrines sufficient to oppose a world view as "total" as that of Marxism or communism: "One cannot effectively combat Marxism by simply criticising its most flagrant mistakes and weaknesses. What is needed is a real *alternative* — a complete ideological and theoretical corpus which would provide a real substitute for those people currently seduced by Marxism."[48] To do this, one must begin "a systematic, more methodical, more obstinate search for the roots of a specific world view."[49] They understand well Evola's metapolitical lesson.

From Sleeping to Awakening: From Alienation to Liberation

Summing up the genealogical critique of egalitarianism as the invader of Europe, Benoist recast it in a cyclical theory inspired by Guénon and Evola; "Today our civilization is dying of an egalitarianism which seems to triumph everywhere. Thus the egalitarian cycle is reaching its end. In our culture, and in terms of the classical process of the development and degeneration of cycles, the idea of egalitarianism passed from the stage of *myth* — equality before God

46. Valla in Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 32; *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
47. "Situations," in *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
48. Valla in Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 32; *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
49. Pierre Vial, " 'Nouvelle Droite' ou Nouvelle culture?," in Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 18. Julius Evola's influence should not be ruled out here. Cf. Pierre-André Taguieff, "Julius Evola: Pensur de la Décadence. Une 'Métaphysique de l'Histoire' dans la Perspective Tradionnelle et l'Hyper-Critique de la Modernité," in *Politica Hermetica*, No. 1 (December 1987), pp. 11-48.

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— to the stage of *ideology* — equality before men — then to the stage of 'scientific' pretention — affirmation of the 'egalitarian *fact*' — in short, from Christianity to democracy, then to socialism and Marxism. Christianity can be strongly criticised for having started this egalitarian cycle by introducing into European thought a *revolutionary anthropology* with a *universalist* and *totalitarian* character."[50] Egalitarian ideology is summarized in the following way: "In monotheism, men are believed to be *essentially* identical: they are equal before a God who created them *all* in his own unique image."[51] Now it happened, as it was "bound" to happen, that this egalitarian discourse was "'brought down to earth' in the process of secularizing "the 'myth', of attempting to substitute the *future* for the *beyond*. In fact, one reaches the point where if men are equal before the Law (of God) they also must be in some way equal before the law (of men), which is its terrestrial counterpart. This happened in 1789."[52] Thus Christianity and the effects of secularization —different forms of the ideology of "human rights" — belong to the same mental tradition: "Here we see not real opposites but variations on the same theme or, more precisely, different antitheses within the same process."[53]

Now "every egalitarian or universalist ideology is *necessarily* totalitarian because it tries to *reduce* all social and spiritual reality to a single model. Implicit in the idea of monotheism is that there is only one truth, only one God, and only one type of man who pleases God."[54] But if egalitarianism "is coming to the end of its cycle (given that this end coincides necessarily with the stage of its greatest influence)"[55] and if, as a result, we are "now living in an interregnum" characterized especially by a revealing vacillation, then: "As Christianity 'moves to the Left', it is inevitable that anti-communism should to a certain extent 'move to the Right'."[56]

What should authentic Europeans expect if they are by nature strangers to egalitarian values? Benoist's answer to this question utilizes the classical metaphor of awakening, which he borrowed from Evola: "We do not need to *convince* as much as to awaken a certain *sensibility*. Those who hold to egalitarian ideologies try to 'convince'; for them, there is a universal *reason* present in all men. For our part, we believe neither in the equality of men nor in the universal demonstration of 'truths'. So we have not only to address the mind but the heart and soul as well. That is why we speak of *images* rather than *concepts — in order to bring to the surface a sensibility which has been repressed in the unconscious of our peoples by two thousand years of egalitarianism*. This is where our ambition

50. Cf. Benoist's September 1976 interview in *Éléments*: "La Question Religieuse: Entretien avec Robert de Herte," in *Dix Ans*, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*, p. 201.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

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resides."[57] One can only "awaken" what already exists in a dormant state. The primary objective is very much a European cultural renaissance. The original and substantial identity of Europeans — their ethno-cultural identity — must return, and will return because it can do so. Clearly it has not been destroyed by the "infiltration" of Judeo-Christianity but only brought to a point of crisis.

"In my opinion, the West was born of a tension between two contradictory tendencies. It grew out of an identity crisis which over the centuries it stopped trying to resolve. It exported its own concerns to the rest of the world, always believing it could ground its own identity on the destruction of the identity of others; it spread its essentially ethnocidal 'civilization of emptiness' (as Robert Jaulin describes it) everywhere."[58] The identitarian concept of Europe stands out clearly in a metaphysics of historical alienation: "For fifteen centuries the history of Europe has been the history of an *internalized* identity crisis. Europe has been in a crisis from the time it could no longer say, with Cicero, '*Sua civique civitati religio . ..est, nostra nobis*' [each state has its religion, we have ours]."[59] Here is the basic thesis: Europe has a substantial identity which was compromised by Christianity — a system of foreign ideas and attitudes. Attempts to undo alienation were undermined by effects which were neither desired nor foreseen and very negative: "Westerners unconsciously tried to resolve this crisis by attempting to convert the whole world to their way of life, which they considered the best and ultimately the only possible one. The result was colonialism, racism, the erosion of collective identities. In my view, Europeans today are consequently suffering from this disastrous result."[60]

Two points are worthy of note. First, the words "colonialism," "racism," and the phrase "erosion of collective identities" are treated as equivalent in keeping with the traditional communitarian characterization of racism as an appeal to universalism.[61] Second, it is peculiarly contradictory to postulate an original and substantial identity for Europe (which can be estranged and then rediscovered) and at the same time to denounce Aristotle's logic and his "principle of identity" as "worn-out propositions."[62] So Benoist calls into

57. *Ibid.*, p. 221 (italics added). These are the last sentences in the interview. On the contraposition of convincing (rationalism, universalism, egalitarianism) and awakening (aristocraticism, differentialism), which originated in Evola, see Benoist, *Vu de Droite*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 and 433.

58. Benoist, *L'Eclipse du Sacré*, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

60. *Ibid.*

61. On this point, see Pierre-André Taguieff, *La Force du Préjugé. Essai sur le Racisme et son Doubles* (Paris: La Découverte, 1988), pp. 393-410.

62. Benoist, *L'eclipse du Sacré*, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-244. "Biological organicism, the principle of indeterminism in physics, holism in sociology, temporal duration in history and synchrony in ethnology, systematics, the archetypical unconscious, interpersonal analysis, etc. are all notions which call into question old presuppositions such as the logic of Aristotle's principle of identity, determinism, linear causality, *a priori* forms of perception, and the irreversibility of space and time — all inherited from Averroes and

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question the obsolete principle of identity but does not hesitate to deplore the erosion of collective identities. In fact he presupposes identity — collective identity, even European identity.[63] He contends that Europeans not only can but must "seek what constitutes their proper identity."[64]

Such a metaphysics of Western history is presented as a history of decadence. But in this crisis, metaphysics does not end in historical fatalism, nor does it end in a contemplation of decadence; "Everything can return. To go back to the source is to take up again the possibility of another beginning. I am not trying to command assent but perhaps to awaken a form of *memory* beyond mere *recollection*."[65] New Right doctrine appears to be focused on the representation of an original Indo-European identity which has been attacked, colonized and corrupted by a "foreign mentality": Judeo-Christianity. Fundamentally egalitarian, the latter has brought about the decadence of the European mind and ultimately caused the decline of the West. The renaissance of European civilization is indistinguishable from the return of an original European identity purified of its monotheistic germs.

Toward a "Second Paganism"

The question of "European identity" is still central in GRECE's latest doctrinal synthesis and is postulated in response to "challenges" to that identity. Having diagnosed the three manifestations of the malady of European culture, Faye indicates the paradoxical task for the "metamorphic" European peoples.[66] In so doing, he assumes the Nietzschean role of the "philosopher-doctor": "The three great challenges which confront European identity today and call its historical continuity into question are multi-racialism, the destruction of its own culture and tradition, and the shock of techno-economic civilization, of the 'techno-cosmos.' None of these challenges, which together constitute both a threat of dissolution and of external homogenization, are insurmountable. Moreover, it is only by surmounting these challenges that Europeans can begin a new stage in their history because, as always, the 'metamorphic' peoples to which they belong must live and must assume the following paradox: to remain true to themselves they must undergo a mutation of themselves — a transgression of self which can only be accomplished by abandoning the

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continued by the scholastics and by Descartes." Prévert's inventory of dualisms raised to the level of a definite argument! For an interesting defense of the organicist paradigm, see Roberto Fondi, *La Révolution Organiciste. Entretien sur les Nouveaux Courants Scientifiques*, Preface by Rémy Chuvin, "Introduction" by Giovanni Monastra, tr. into French by Philippe Baylet (Paris: Le Labyrinthe, 1986). This demonstrates GRECE's break with dogmatic Darwinism.

63. See also Benoist, *L'Eclipse du Sacré*, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-218.

64. *Ibid.*, 217.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 245. In the final analysis, he seeks to "awaken" a deep traditional-communitarian *we* that is asleep, imprisoned or in exile.

66. At the conclusion of *Les Nouveaux Enjuex Idéoloques*, *op. cit.*. This is the eighth volume of *Cahiers de la Nouvelle Droite*.

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Judeo-Christian, the humanist and the universalist parts of our heritage. This condition is necessary in order to rid ourselves of *nihilism* — that malady peculiar to modern Europeans, as Nietzsche sensed, which is entirely the result of the Judeo-Christian mentality."[67]

Paradox — the rhetorical trope also found in the inherited self-designation of "conservative revolution" — is the method called upon to solve the problem. Characteristically, the oxymoron or the paradox is the only rhetorical means of surmounting an antimony modeled on an argument. Neither conservatism nor progressivism but rather "metamorphism," synonymous with "true traditionalism,"[68] is positive as the principle of a "culture" or a "neo-European civilization" which remains to be constructed. This is "revolutionary traditionalism" or the "conservative revolution." It must be built with a Faustian spirit, considered to be the essence or "the *spirit* of the European tradition,"[69] which is "pagan to the core."[70] This spirit is defined in terms like "assault," "energy," and "pride."[71] It attempts to "make the human divine"[72] and, more specifically, is capable of founding the age of a "second paganism," itself defined by a negative conjunction: "And if, in order to overcome moribund religions, a 'second paganism' must be built today for the future, it should be sought in the double movement of surpassing 'beliefs in the divine' and of refusing atheism — in the affirmation of a transcendence within immanence, in the *substitution of the superhuman for the divine*."[73]

Instead of calling upon a nostalgia borrowed from Heidegger (*à la* Benoist's theme of self-forgetfulness) or for a voluntarism borrowed from [Ernst] Jünger, here the Nietzschean vulgate is embellished: "The gods may descend into us, and it is we, their new masters, who will call upon them. Possibly the great figure of the engineer is the one who will make the appeal."[74]

The Only Way to Happiness: A Third Way

The scheme begins with the *coincidentia oppositorum* — a miraculous synthesis of contraries, the paradoxical unity and identity of "neither one nor the other" (a neutral expression) and "both the one and the other" (a complex expression). The complex-neutral — a rhetorical trope — founds the "third way."

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67. *Ibid.*, p. 131. On the "European"-Promethean theme of accepting challenges, cf. Alain de Benoist, "L'Europe Retrouvée," in *Maiastra. Renaissance de l'Occident?* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1979), p. 301: "a . . . common characteristic of the European mentality seems to reside in a constant tendency to accept the *challenges* of existence." If the motif stems from Arnold Toynbee (challenge/response), it reached GRECE via L. Rougier, *Le Génie de l'Occident* (Paris: Laffont, 1969).
68. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*

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Europe is the center of an identitarian myth based on the phantasm of an original, pure, ethnic and cultural difference. It is accompanied by a phantasm of decadence attributed to the "colonization" of the European mind and by "the monotheism of 'religions of the Book'." In this both GRECE and the Club de l'Horloge (at least until 1979 and in its most discreet version) adopted a doctrinal position of neo-fascism. In 1961, Maurice Bardèche presented Europeanism as an "almost unavoidable derivative" of the spirit of fascism after the destruction of those states which embodied it.[75] He described the European expansion of fascist nationalism in this way: "Neo-fascism puts the independence of the nation above everything else. But it also believes that in the modern world our European nations can no longer ensure effectively the defense of their territory *on their own* and cannot even claim to have a really independent economy *of their own*. Whether sincere or not, the dream fascist powers had before the war of building a European empire, is a serious and urgent task for our time. Our nations cannot regain the power they lost so completely in 1945 except within this European empire, which is the only way to ensure their defense and their true freedom. Doctrinaire neo-fascists are thus resolutely European."[76]

From the "third force" to the "Third World" by means of the "third way" — the subsequent paths of the New Right were well marked at the beginning of the 1960s: "Neo-fascism considers itself as much *estranged* from the democratic world as from the Marxist world. It does not want to become embroiled in the struggle between capitalism and Marxism and will always seek a *third way* to affirm its own position between the two camps. . . . The island of Europe is only one application of this position at a particular moment in history."[77]

It is this model of the third way which provided the collection of rhetorical operations required to legitimate the turn to the Third World in the doctrine of the New Right. The new alliance between a Europe freed from the West and a non-aligned Third World can only be grounded on a reduction of adversaries — Moscow and Washington — to something identical, unique and homogeneous. This makes it possible to consider the third way the only way to happiness for all "rooted" cultures. In the face of the intrinsically negative Same stands the absolutely positive Other — as long as the other of the Other is embodied in the identitarian We of the Europeans. The appeal to tolerance does not exclude the affirmation of such a Manichean dualism. In 1986, when Benoist introduced the charter of the Right's pro-Third World stance (the last avatar of the differentialist doctrine), he defined the split beyond all imaginary splits: "Far beyond the split between Right and Left, the fault lines of

75. Maurice Bardche, *Qu'est-ce que le Fascisme?* (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1961), p. 199. On Bardche's role in the history of European neo-fascism, see Angelo del Boca and Mario Giovana, *I "Figli del sole": Mezzo Secolo di Nazifascismo nel Mondo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1965), pp. 79ff, 129ff, and 226ff.

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

77. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

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opposition will be . . . those situated beyond liberalism and socialism, beyond Washington and Moscow, beyond conflicting but connected (because they share the world between them) ideologies. [These are the ideologies of] those who believe, whatever their domain (sic), in the possibility of a *third way* — in the way of autonomy and thus of liberty — and those who . . . accept the bipolar vision, alignment, and *de facto* subjection."[78]

Differentialist Culturalism and Anti-Totalitarian Legitimation (1980-1987)

GRECE's second doctrinal synthesis began to crystalize in 1980. It was characterized by a radical anti-universalism and its positive corollary — the culturalist variant of the ideology of difference which largely derived from the radical ethnopluralism of the leftist denigrators of "ethnocidal" Europe. (Historically, Robert Jaulin is its leading figure.) Since 1980-87 the differentialist problematic has remained the basis of all GRECE's arguments Only the reference to "nominalism" has been more or less abandoned owing to criticism formulated in *Les Temps Modernes* (February 1984).

In large red and yellow letters on the first cover page of its journal *Éléments*, GRECE published the two last slogans relating to the culture war: "The right to difference" and "To end all totalitarianisms." Both equally prescriptive slogans have become inseparable in the new public and exoteric argumentation of the New Right. Accordingly, the editorial board explains: "To end all totalitarianisms one must recognize each culture's right to difference. European peoples must explore the depths of their spiritual identity. Athena's voice has always guided those Europeans who sought their origins."[79]

The crux of the formal definition of "totalitarianism" is that it denies "the right to difference." The first proposition is followed by a second: If tolerant pluralism is characteristic of the European mind, then the origin of totalitarianism as such, and the origin of all totalitarianisms (variants of the first), is monotheism. But still this needs clarification — it is a de-territorialized monotheism, which goes beyond the strict boundaries of a particular people (the Hebrew people) or a particular culture. This argument is simultaneously exoteric, tactical[80] and constitutive — the differentialist position is defined primarily by the rejection of universalism. The New Right explicitly targets *universalism*, which is reputedly peculiar to "Judeo-Christianity" or "Christianity" *tout court*. GRECE's 14th national colloquium (held at the Palais des Congrès, Paris, December 9, 1979) was devoted to the programmatic theme:

78. Benoist, *Europe, Tiers monde, Même Combat*, *op. cit.*, p. 17. On the Nietzschean origins of Benoist's advocacy of a third way for Europe, see Pierre-André Taguieff, "Alain Benoist, Philosophe," in *Les Temps Modernes* (February 1984), pp. 1449ff.

79. *Éléments*, No. 33 (February-March 1980), p. 3. The reference to Athena is illustrated by a photograph reproduced on the cover ("the sun on the tip of Sounion").

80. The charge of anti-Semitism, which has radically discredited all ideological and political positions since 1945, must be avoided at all costs. The New Right exploits the anti-Christian formulations of anti-Semitism instead of its anti-Zionist reformulations.

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"Against totalitarianisms: For a new culture." The Secretary-General, Pierre Vial, "vigorously denounced monotheistic totalitarianism" in his presentation on "religious totalitarianism."[81] In fact, the first statements in the text concerning Vial's address are unambiguous: "Totalitarianism was born 4000 years ago somewhere between Mesopotamia and the Jordan valley. It was born on the day when the idea of monotheism appeared. The idea of monotheism implies the submission of the human being to the will of a single, omniscient, eternal, all-powerful god. The Eternal. The Omnipotent One. These are the names given to the god-judge of monotheism by that work praising totalitarianism called the Bible" (typescript, page 1). The summary of this passage offered by the editorial board of *Éléments* explains some of its aspects but includes a disavowal of it in many respects: "In reality, the birth of totalitarianism in the West coincided with the rise of Christianity: 'Whoever is not with me is against me' (Luke 11: 23). For Pierre Vial . . . this statement, attributed to Christ, 'summarizes the totalitarian character of *all monotheism*.'[82] His address, devoted to religious totalitarianism, consisted in a kind of genealogy of Christian monotheism supported by a close reading of the Bible. In Vial's mind, . . . his critique did not target monotheism as the ideological and historical foundation of a *particular* culture — Jewish culture — because the centuries have constantly proved the richness and singularity of this culture."[83]

I will not insist on the all too obvious contradiction: on the one hand, the affirmation of the totalitarian character "of all monotheism"; on the other, the restriction of the totalitarian spirit to that one monotheism which departed from the strict boundaries of "Jewish culture." More important than this rather incoherent argumentation, connected to some prudential imperatives, is the distinction between a good particularist monotheism and a bad universalist monotheism. Vial's anti-monotheistic criticism "specifically targets Christianity which, by stripping monotheism of its national Jewish specificity and giving it a universal value, always contests the people's right to cultivate their own spiritual roots."[84] Monotheism is good for the Jews; it is good only for the Jews: "Jewish monotheism only becomes really totalitarian when it has ceased being Jewish."[85] It is the process of universalization which brings to the surface, if you will, the totalitarian potentials of monotheism. Thus monotheism is considered to be the origin of totalitarianism, of all forms and variants of it.[86] It unfolds and is

81. *Éléments*, No. 33 (February-March 1980), p. 10.

82. This lapse is important, since its many restrictive explanations have served to mask deep-rooted motives. The disavowal follows almost immediately in the previously cited summary ("for Pierre Vial . . .evidently not . . ."; surely this is no evidence!). It should be noted that the full text of Vial's address was not published subsequently; only journalists invited to the colloquium were given access to the typescript.

83. *Éléments*, No, 33 (February-March 1980), p. 12. (italics added).

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.*

86. *Ibid.*, p. 10: "to study the foundations of totalitarian ideology and to participate in a innovative and detailed critique of its different manifestations throughout history."

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revealed when the same monotheism "parades its claim to submit to the law of the one god all those peoples with different religious conceptions."[87]

Apart from their interest as striking summaries of the "monotheistic" genealogies of totalitarianism, these formulas have the advantage of clearly articulating the anti-totalitarian theme and the unconditional imperative of the right to difference. The underlying opposition is axiological — the positive value of *difference* is opposed to the negative value of *uniformity*. This axiological opposition is itself placed in a metahistorical context, where it is assigned an origin in "the conflict between paganism and Christianity [which] issues from the struggle between two irreconcilable conceptions of the world."[88] This is how the axiom of the struggle of mentalities — an acceptable reformulation of the struggle of races — is expressed. The principle of difference/diversity is opposed to the principle of uniformity/universality even as pagan culture or European mentality is opposed to monotheistic culture or biblical mentality. Jean Varenne, who later became president of GRECE, thus tried to "demonstrate in what sense totalitarianism is fundamentally foreign to the most specific and ancient European mentality." It took only a few words: "The tripartite principle, which Indo-European studies have made evident — the differentiation and hierarchical structuring of the functions of sovereignty, defense and production — prohibits the reduction of social life to a single function, especially the economic function (or the military one, in the case of Nazism or fascism . . .), and favors the spread of individual and collective freedoms."[89] Here is the good news: "Old Indo-European societies did not know the totalitarian spirit."[90]

Oppositional pairs follow each other and are linked together: paganism vs. monotheism, difference vs. uniformity, freedom vs. slavery, particular vs. universal, anti-totalitarianism vs. totalitarianism. All that remained was to impute to totalitarianism (which, as something cultural, becomes a metaphor) the tendency to eradicate collective differences, to attribute to it the supreme fault of suppressing differences and promoting standardization — the egalitarian tendency: "Cultural totalitarianism, which has as its goal the alienation of the spirit, the destruction of differences and national entities, is imbued with the germs of egalitarian ideologies."[91] The polemical coupling of the demand for equality (not distinguished from egalitarian ideology) and the active hatred of cultural diversity is central to GRECE's argumentation. If the demand for equality, which in modernity is the demand for universality ("all men are created equal"), is indistinguishable from the tendency to "leveling from below"

87. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
89. *Ibid.*
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.* From "cultural genocide' to "cultural totalitarianism". . . . One would have to analyze more specifically the dissemination of the euphemistic metaphor ("cultural") by examining common nouns for the absolute ideological evil ("genocide," "totalitarianism." etc.) to which the metaphor is attributed.

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(the egalitarian ideal of resentment) and the will to suppress cultural differences (ethnocidal will), then the authentic anti-totalitarian position is defined irrefutably as *anti-egalitarian* and *differentialist*. To struggle against totalitarianism is to reject all the supra-ethnic forms of monotheism. It is to denounce the demand for universality as the pretext for the uprooting linked to cultural imperialism (global ethnocide) or economic imperialism (plutocratic cosmopolitanism). It is also to challenge the egalitarian ideal as a ruse for the negative desire to standardize from below.

This is how the anti-totalitarian ideology dominant among the leading intelligentsia (always situated "on the Left") at the end of the 1970s was recuperated and turned around by the New Right — a striking illustration of the *strategy of retortion* which seized upon a prior ideological theme: the right to difference. The New Right's denunciation of "cultural totalitarianism" follows upon and brings to fruition the idea of "cultural genocide" pursued by the extreme ethno-pluralist Left in the 1970s. The differentialist formulation of racism includes two arguments external to that strategy, arguments adapted to the values current among the types of public being targeted — *anti-Americanism* and *anti-capitalism* (anti-economism, anti-materialism). Benoist concludes a long study on "racist totalitarianism" with the following diagnosis: "Today, and especially since the end of WWII, we are witnessing a considerable degree of standardization . . . . In our view, this standardization is consistent with the progress of a dominant *egalitarian ideology* which, believing that differences between peoples and cultures are transitory and of little consequence, naturally tends to be little concerned with the progressive erosion of diverse cultures. It is also consistent with the diffusion of *Americanism* throughout the world — with a materialistic and moralizing ideology of a "universal republic" where the heterogeneity of its human constituents no longer leaves room for consensus except on the level of *things*."[92] This diagnosis is followed by the positing of an alternative which gives the doctrinal differentialist "reasons for hope" — either the progress of global egalitarianism and standardization or the development of differential abilities and the affirmation of collective identities. Benoist states: "Given this situation, we see reasons for hope only in the affirmation of collective singularities, the spiritual reappropriation of heritages, the clear awareness of roots and specific cultures. . . . We are counting on the breakup of the singular model, whether this occurs in the rebirth of regional languages, the affirmation of ethnic minorities or in phenomena as diverse as decolonization . ..[whether in the] affirmation of being black, the political pluralism of Third World countries, the rebirth of a Latin-American civilization, the resurgence of an Islamic culture, etc. . . ."[93] The metahistorical conflict between paganism and monotheism is reformulated in

92. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
93. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

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neutral terms with an ideologically acceptable supplement, thanks to an eminent heterodox Marxist: "along with Henri Lefebvre, we interpret this play of influences as the effect of a 'titanic struggle in which homogenizing powers conflict with differentialist capabilities.'"[94]

There is still the question of the definition of "cultures." Benoist lists three characteristics: 1) culture "includes everything added to nature and, as such [sic], it derives from what is specifically human in man"[95] ; 2) "these cultures, as constantly renewed *destinies*, are grounded only in *collective identities*"[96] ; 3) finally, these cultures are "founded only on the *right to difference*, certainly the right to individual difference, but also and especially the right to collective difference."[97] The right to difference has "its counterpart" in a duty: "To claim the right to difference implies the duty to exercise it in practice; first of all, to find in this difference the sources of new norms."[98] This means "turning the support of collective identities . . . into a means of restructuring the destiny of peoples, a means of deepening the constitutive values of one's heritage."[99]

These are the principles of what Benoist calls "our anti-racism." This anti-racism is differentialist, i.e., it calls into question all forms of the demand for universality. Differentialist anti-racism implies the development of "an education in diversity" which attempts to utilize feelings of belonging "for positive and fertile confrontations. It not only admits the Other but encourages him to perpetuate his difference and proposes that all peoples constitute their own specific difference in order to create higher forms from this specificity."[100]

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94. *Ibid.*, p. 20. The context for the precise citation follows: "Is the modern world collapsing into a bloody chaos? . . . This chaos makes sense if one perceives in these conflicts and confrontations the titanic struggle *between homogenizing powers and differentialist capabilities*. See Henri Lefebvre, *Le Manifeste Differentialiste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), Ch. 1, p. 49. To my knowledge, this is the first scholarly treatise in the French language of the catastrophe interpretation of the "threat of homogenization" (p. 51), of the "homogenizing forces" which "have enormous resources at their disposal" (p. 49). In the midst of the rising differentialist wave, Lefebvre demonstrated a certain clarity of mind when he distinguished "a double critique" of this "threat of homogeneity" — "a *rightist critique* exhibiting a taste for the past and nostalgia, and a *leftist critique* retaining all the elements of revolt and revolution" (p. 51). But he failed to mention what he could not foresee in the realm of ideology at that time — the possibility of a rightist critique which is not nostalgic but revolutionary. Although GRECE already existed (1968), its principal doctrine emphasizing difference had not yet been elaborated (which occurred between 1972 and 1980). The same reference to Lefebvre is made by Benoist in a study in which he analyzes and discusses the model of "differentialist racism," which I described in "Racisme: Remarques Autour d'une Definition," in André Béjin and Julien Freund, eds., *Racismes. Antiracismes* (Paris: Librairie des Mridiens, Klincksieck, 1986), p. 244.

95. *Éléments*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.*

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Ibid.*

100. *Ibid.*

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Thus GRECE's differentialist "anti-racism" defines racism — its idea of racism — as one of the historical forms of totalitarianism which issued from monotheism. In this perspective, there is only a universalist racism.[101] The ethical and political "anti-racism" of the New Right is summed up in a prescription: "the legitimate defense of singularities and collective identities."[102] The final proposition concerning the alliance of all the particular means of identitarian self-defense against the universalist monster which supposedly wants to devour them reads as follows: "There is an . . . urgent necessity for all peoples, all races, all cultures still conscious of themselves to unite against their common enemy — those who want to destroy them in order to impose upon them the same mode of existence, the same standard of living, the same impoverishing and destructive pseudo-civilization."[103]

The theme of GRECE's 15th national colloquium (held at the Palais du Congrès, Versailles, May 17, 1981) was accordingly "the cause of peoples". Five years later, Benoist published the ideological charter of differentialism promoting peoples' rights against human rights, the defense of the cause of peoples against the ideology of "the rights of abstract 'man',"[104] the choice of "rooted cultures and differentiated ways of life" against "global uniformity"; in short, "Europe and the Third World against the West."[105] These are the standard formulations of the deepest divisions and of the principal conflict. Among the "major challenges" to "European identity," Faye logically concludes: 1) "*multiracial society*," [is] a challenge to our personal anthropology"[106]; the "threat" of multiracial society to "European civilization" is that it destroys "the relative *ethno-cultural homogeneity* of the inhabitants of Europe"[107] on which "identity, the deep feeling of belonging, and the value of the idea of citizenship"[108] are grounded; 2) "*deculturation* and the loss of traditions [are] a challenge to our cultural memory"[109] ; they pose the threat of the "forgetting of origins" and the "loss of one's heritage,"[110] "the abandonment of one's own culture [European civilization] and the idea of adopting a new one."[111] The New Right also makes memory sacred in its own way.

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101. "Judeo-Christian universalism is really the matrix for racism." See Faye, *Les Nouveaux Enjuex Idéoloques*, *op. cit.*, p. 45. On how such a definition was produced, see Taguieff, *La Force du Préjugé*, *op. cit.*, pp. 393-410.
102. *Éléments*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
103. *Ibid.*
104. *Europe, Tiers Monde, Même Combat*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
106. Faye, *Les Nouveaux Enjuex Idéoloques*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
108. *Ibid.*
109. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
111. *Ibid.*

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Behind the Glorification of Difference: The Fear of Intermingling

A paradox of what is called "racism" is that it can be expressed either in terms of zoological race or in terms of culture, intellect, tradition, religion, etc.; in short, in terms of "particularities" or "collective identities." On closer examination, racism appears more complex than naive anti-racism makes it out to be. It is more difficult to identify precisely and to combat effectively than is generally believed. Its most radical forms are not always the most visible.[112]

I distinguish two forms of racism. One is universal and postulates the existence of a universal scale of values between races which accordingly are seen as apt, less apt, or inept with respect to variable criteria. The other is communitarian and turns the difference or identity of a group into an absolute. Here it is less a question of inequality than of the inability to communicate, of being incommensurable or incompatible. As a result, the human race is divided into closed totalities. The differentialist imperative is the demand to preserve this or to purify the properly communitarian entity. If inegalitarian racism is haunted by the loss of status, the abasement of superiors, then differentialist racism is haunted by the loss of distinctiveness, the eradication of the distinctive identity of the group.

Inegalitarian racism may be understood in terms of the classical "exploitation theory of racial prejudice" (Gordon W. Allport). It presupposes a system of imperial and/or colonial domination and exploitation which the ideology of the inequality of human types legitimates — grounds and justifies. I should explain that the universality implicit in inegalitarian racism is derived from the presupposition of a unique model for the hierarchical classification of races or civilizations. This formal universalism has nothing to do with the demand for universality which grounds all ethics focused on respect of the person. In my opinion, there is no substantial anti-racism that does not postulate the infinite dignity of each and every individual no matter what his or her system of appurtenances (of "origins"), no matter what his or her abilities (intellectual, social, etc.). This is the core of ethical anti-racism, which remains untouched by any and all ideological instrumentalization. What I call *differentialist racism* cannot be reduced to the theory and practice of inequality which legitimates domination and exploitation. Rather, it is imbued with the categorical imperative of preserving the identity of the group, whose very "purity" makes it sacred — the identity of heredities or heritages. It stigmatizes the mixing of bodies and cultures (or mental forms) as the supreme evil (stain) and oscillates in its socio-political manifestation between a system of exclusion — separate development or discrimination — and a system of extermination — apartheid or genocide. Of course, history generally provides "impure" examples or syncretic illustrations of these ideal types of racism. But to confuse them is a theoretical error with grave consequences for the anti-racist struggle as well as for the understanding of the phenomena associated with racism.

112. For a more elaborate analysis, see Taguieff, *La Force du Préjugé*, *op. cit.*

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The last doctrine of the New Right (since 1979/80) gives precedence to the idea of difference — what Benoist calls his anti-racism is defined by a radical interpretation of the "right to difference." Since racism is defined as a lack of respect for differences, the New Right rejected the very idea of a "differentialist racism." Respectability forced its hand. For the New Right, racism can only be a variant of biblical universalism — the ideological inheritance of a monotheism which "reduces" human diversity, a machine to eradicate differences. The polemical character of such a definition is all too obvious. In the struggle against "Judeo-Christianity," effects which are only contingent and derived from modes of legitimation are attributed to the core of biblical monotheism. This reaches such a level of ideological delirium that any doctrine at all could be used to rationalize any practice. If we agree with the New Right that there are universalist legitimations of colonial or imperial racism, we should nevertheless clarify two things — this universalism is a pseudo-universalism, and the anti-racism which follows from it implies that the demand for universality has priority with respect to particularities. The right to difference is only a *secondary implication* of a well-grounded anti-racism — to accord it a primary place would be to succumb to the premises of racism. The respect for persons includes respect for their "cultural" choices. It is because universalism is not sufficiently universalist that it admits a racism which is at once reductive and homogenizing and which does not respect the diversity of forms of life and thought. Universalists will have to try harder!

In its current form, anti-racism is open to criticism of its three types of "weaknesses" — its political uses, its contradictions and inconsistencies reflected in the welter of its slogans and battle cries, and its lack of a theoretical foundation. Too often the anti-racist struggle takes its concept of racism from an anti-fascist discourse which is as obsolete as it is frozen in a commemorative posture. Today it is in danger of taking the concept ready-made from the new racists, who reduce it to the lack of respect for difference. This "totalitarian racism" is in turn reduced to a necessary effect of a universalism of Judeo-Christian origin.

The difficulty anti-racists have had over the past ten years when they have tried to define what they are fighting results from the difficulty of defining racism. Anti-racists are behind in the fight against their main enemies. They continue to see racism only in the rejection of difference (*heterophobia*), and this blinds them to the appearance of softer, new and euphemistic forms of racism praising difference (*heterophilia*) and substituting "culture" for "race." It is hardly understood that the norm of respect for difference, far from embodying that fundamental human right which is the right to difference,[113] serves to make presentable, even honorable, the obsession with contact — the phobia of mixing — which is the core of racism. To keep one's cultural distance is to avoid all cross-breeding — the supreme threat, the presumed cause of an inevitable decline.

113. Cf. Roger Mehl, "Dissidence et Droits de l'Homme," in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April-June 1985), pp. 189ff.

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My working hypothesis is that racism can be expressed both in the rejection and in the praise of difference, in terms of either races or culture, intellect, tradition and belief.[114] But it is fundamentally *mixophobic*. Without postulating a division of labor, the recent formulations of national populism are clearly rooted in the ideology of difference put forward by the New Right. The racism of exclusion is given a place of honor in the general demand of the right to difference. On September 19, 1982, Jean-Marie Le Pen proclaimed : "We not only have the right but the duty to defend our national character as well as our right to difference." In April 1985, Brigneau wrote in *Minute*: "It is preferable to avoid mixing and cross-breeding. It is preferable to preserve the superiority of the race to which I belong — its difference, its originality." In September 1987, Le Pen wrote: "I love the North Africans. But their place is in North Africa. . . . I am not a racist but a nationalist. . . . To be harmonious, a nation must have a certain ethnic and spiritual homogeneity." Therefore, "the problem of immigration [must] be solved for the benefit of France by a peaceful and organized return of immigrants."[115]

Beginning in 1980, the New Right reformulated its basic arguments concerning the rejection of aliens who cannot be "assimilated" — individuals from outside Europe. However, a tolerant differentialism forces its hand by insisting on the interest the expelled people themselves have in *returning to their own countries*. Those forced out should themselves be convinced of the fact that they are not wanted outside their countries of origin.

One should bear in mind the New Right's peculiar way of legitimizing the problem. Under the rubric of "another pro-Third World stance," indistinguishable from an "authentic differentialism" (the defenders of a multicultural society are by definition inauthentic), Faye asserted (with the complacency of a cynic and the naivete of a dogmatist) that "in keeping with the core of the right to difference doctrine, we must reject multiracial society and envisage, together with the immigrants themselves, their return to their countries of origin."[116]

Whereas advocates of national populism argue that Arab-Islamic immigrants cannot be assimilated in a country like France, shaped by centuries of Catholic monarchy, the Europeanist New Right argues that the cultural traditions of immigrants are radically foreign to those of a pre-Christian European civilization which continues to exist beneath the mental colonization brought about by twenty centuries of biblical monotheism. The two positions do not appeal to one and the same substantive identity when they claim that immigrants from outside Europe are by nature foreign to it. But in both cases, the difference between "us" and "them" is made absolute and is the basis for the prescription: exclusion/expulsion. "We" are the descendants and inheritors of the Crusaders — the last legitimate sons of the Indo-European cavaliers. Safeguarding the

114. Cf. Pierre-André Taguieff, "Le Néo-Racisme Differentialiste," in *Langage et Société*, No. 34 (December 1985), pp. 69-98.

115. *Arabies*, No. 9, p. 36.

116. *Éléments*, *op. cit.*, No. 48 (Winter 1983/84).

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integrity of "us" implies the absolute rejection of any heterogeneous, ethnocultural elements in the national body. Pluralism can only regulate relations between ethnic groups, races, nations. It is thus not a question of practicing pluralism or differentialism in the internal affairs of human groups, wherever they may be. The praise of difference translates as respectably as possible into the will to hold others at a distance. One can detect in arguments rejecting multiracial or pluricultural society the hidden notion of the inevitability of racial struggle, together with that of a fatal conflict between populations which come into contact with each other.

"The right to difference" changed from being a means of defending oppressed minorities and their "cultural rights" into an instrument for legitimating the most extreme appeals for the self-defense of a "threatened" national (and/or European) identity.[117] After its appearance in the anti-Western sphere of influence of the far Left, the real question of ethnocide has degenerated into an instrumental myth in the nationalist propaganda for France — the National Front — and for Europe — the New Right. It is not surprising that a master of legitimation such as Benoist has added quite a few nuances, restrictions and other disavowals (like the new version of the soul supplement — the "dialogue between cultures" — found in the accepted discourse of international relations) to demands for exclusion justified by differentialism. The New Right has taken up the theme and reoriented it under the false premise that, in order to have "dialogue," "cultures" must be "rooted." This is a paradox which may have infinite interpretations — to be open, a culture system must be closed. This is also a truism.

Within a decade, the theme of difference has moved from the far Left to the far Right. Maybe it is only returning to its true intellectual origin. Evola, who understood the question well, stated: "The racist recognizes difference and wants difference."[118] If differentialist arguments have found a welcome home in xenophobic nationalism, it is because they have always closely accompanied it and subscribed to its basic themes. According to J. Ploncard d'Assac, the nationalism of the Right implies "the right of peoples to remain what they are." This is why returning to one's origins so often turns into *national racism*.

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117. Paulin J. Hountondji (National University of Benin) has developed a similar criticism of the political uses of absolute cultural relativism. She opposes a certain integrationism of the "Negro difference" — especially derived from a particularist reading of the "ethno-philosophical" hypothesis and the dogmatic demand for a "Negro" cultural identity. (Recall L. S. Senghor's 1939 statement: "Emotion is as Negro as reason is Hellenic.") Cf. Paulin J. Hountondji, "Pièges de la Différence," in *Diogène*, No. 131 (1985), pp. 51-61. The problem is well-defined by Kouadio Augustin Dibi, "L'Idée d'une 'Philosopohie Africaine': du Psychologisme à l'Être devenu," in *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, No. 4 (October-December, 1982), pp. 385-392; and by Jean Kinyongo, "La Philosophie Africaine et son Histoire," in *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, *ibid.*, pp. 411-414. It looks as if the New Right has defined what one might call a *European ethno-philosophy* — something akin to original Greek philosophy in which all universalist aims are eliminated.

118. Julius Evola, *Éléments pour une Éducation Raciale*, tr. Gérard Boulanger (Puiseaux: Pards, 1985) p. 29.

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Alain de Benoist's Anti-Americanism

Paul Gottfried

Throughout the development of the French New Right as a intellectual movement, Alain de Benoist has exercised a remarkable degree of control. From its break with the Catholic nationalist Right (in the late 1960s) through its redefinition as a European national movement with a socio-biological focus to its more recent engagement on behalf of Third World as well as European communitarian identities, the New Right has been primarily the evolving creation of a single mind. Whether under pseudonyms like Robert de Herte or in collaboration with Pierre Vial, Jean Mabire, Guillaume Faye, Giorgio Locchi, and other like-minded thinkers, Benoist has had a free hand in moulding his movement.

In his book on the French New Right, Pierre-André Taguieff traces all the shifts and turns in Benoist's early political career: from his days as an organizer of the French nationalist youth group, *Fédération des étudiants nationalistes*, through his transformation into a European nationalist, as seen in his contributions to the monthly *Europe-Action*, culminating in his founding role in GRECE (*Groupes de Recherches et d'Étude pour la Civilisation Européenne*).[1] Between the mid- and late 1960s, Benoist went from the traditional French nationalist Right, with its clericalist admixture, into a neo-pagan and biologically-based defense of European unity. The recycled fascist sympathizer Julius Evola became important for Benoist's work at a time when he began to look for a European identity that could be divested of the Christian heritage. In

1. Pierre-André Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite: Jalons d'une Analyse Critique* (Paris: Descartes-&Cie, 1994), pp. 10-12 and 112-63.

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the 1970s logical positivism and a savage anti-Americanism were added to Benoist's cosmology; his earlier anti-communism gave way to an equally fervent anti-liberalism directed against American cultural imperialism. In the 1980s there were new shifts in emphasis: appeals to mystical and intuitive experiences and to Heideggerian existentialism, and the abandonment of the stress on the biological distinctiveness of groups in favor of communitarianism. The new *thème-maître* in Benoist's anti-liberal stance became the defense of the *principe différentialiste*: the right of communities to remain separate and organic, in the face of global bureaucracy and multinational corporations.

Despite these reorientations, there have been only two significant ruptures in the French New Right. One was the split in the late 1970s between the neo-pagan anti-liberals in GRECE and what was originally a GRECE satellite, the *Club de l'Horloge*, founded in 1974. The Catholic and procapitalist members of the latter were allied to Benoist during his anti-Communist and anti-socialist phase, but came to an acrimonious parting of the ways with him by 1979. The second rupture involved the loss of followers, most notably Pierre Vial, to Jean LePen's National Front. As the New Right has searched out Third World alliances and spoken up for Muslim communities in France, it has alienated French and European nationalists hitherto associated with it.

Neither of these splits was entirely unpredictable, and both betoken the hold of established French conservative thinking on some of Benoist's erstwhile followers. But more remarkable has been Benoist's ability to keep his movement going while resisting powerful opponents. These now include every major grouping on the French electoral Right and much of the Paris press. As Taguieff demonstrates, there were two major assaults on Benoist from journalists and established intellectuals, one in 1979 and the other in 1993.[2] Both were launched with the help of the mainstream press that depicted Benoist and the anti-liberal New Right as crypto-Nazi. The defense of Benoist against the charge of anti-Semitism by Raymond Aron in 1979 and 1983,[3] who found much to disagree with but nothing anti-Jewish in Benoist's corpus, could not deflect these attacks. Benoist and his collaborators, who wrote for and staffed *Figaro Magazine*, a publication founded by Robert Hersant in 1979, suffered an irreversible professional setback. They were driven from Hersant's widely circulated and profitable weekly when its publisher

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-46.

3. Raymond Aron, "La nouvelle Droite," in *L'Express* (July 21, 1979), p. 49. See also Aron's *Mémoires*, Vol. II (Paris: Juilliard, 1983), pp. 979-84.

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panicked at the growing notoriety of his New Right contributors.

A less costly but equally abrasive attack against Benoist took place in 1993, with *Le Monde* and other French newspapers denouncing his "insidious" attempts to win media and journalistic respectability.[4] Essential to this second campaign was the "Appeal to Vigilance" which appeared in *Le Monde* July 13, 1993, signed by well-known personalities such as Jacques Derrida, Umberto Eco, Léon Poliakov, and Jean-Pierre Vernant. Taguieff notes the overblown and extravagant charges in this document, and the glaring hypocrisy of *soi-disant* liberals who wish to close off debate to others. Nonetheless, he observes that, unlike the campaign of 1979, the anti-Benoist campaign of 1993 fizzled out. This *coup de long feu* resulted not simply from the absurdity of the charges but because by then Benoist did not have much left. He had lost his mainstream journalistic connections by the early 1980s; moreover, as a longtime acquaintance of Benoist (and a former American correspondent for *Nouvelle Ecole*) I suspect the disappearance of Benoist's sumptuous flagship publication three years ago may indicate mounting financial difficulties.

While most of the attacks on Benoist are both malicious and stupid, his anti-Americanism is something he might do well to reconsider. Throughout his career, Benoist has committed against the American people the kind of "demonization" he has accused his enemies of inflicting on him. His widely publicized charge (in September, 1990) against the West as an "old, dreary prostitute who only obeys the law of cash," was clearly targeted at the US during the Gulf War.[5] It recycled the familiar complaint raised by Benoist since the mid-1970s: the "West" was a US creation; the US had pushed its cultural and political dependents into a confrontation with the Europeans' natural allies; and it had launched this war to subvert a communitarian, anti-global resurgence in the Third World. By January 1976 Benoist had laid the whole framework for these accusations in his longest anti-American tirade, written in collaboration with the Italian neo-fascist Giorgio Locchi (using the pseudonym Hans-Jürgen Nigra).[6] This jeremiad pulled together at least one hundred years of anti-American diatribes from both Left and Right. Americans were portrayed as religious fanatics, garish materialists, insensitive racists and subverters of all national traditions but their own.

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4. See *Le Monde* (June 26, 1993), p. 7; and *Le Canard Enchaîné* (June 23, 1993), p. 4.
5. Robert de Herte, "Le Temps des Hypocrites," in *Éléments*, No. 69 (Fall 1990), p. 3.
6. *Nouvelle École*, No. 27-28 (January 1976), pp. 9-96.

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One influence on Benoist's anti-Americanism has been his avowed neo-paganism, which has also fueled his crusade against Judeo-Christianity and its lamented conquest of the West. According to Taguieff, it is possible to find in Benoist's neo-paganism a *leitmotif* operative throughout his intellectual political odyssey. From socio-biology and scientific positivism through the rediscovery of myth to the stress on preserving communal identity, neo-paganism has accompanied all of Benoist's wanderings. While Judeo-Christianity, within the established polarity, stands for individualism, egalitarianism, the domination of nature, and technological materialism, paganism, it is seen to nurture communal solidarity, hierarchy, reverence for the natural order, and the Indo-European genius. Unlike Judeo-Christianity, paganism, particularly in the form Benoist hopes to resurrect it, accepts multiple gods and cosmic orders, and it requires not the subduing of nature but man's integration into it.

The dualism between pagan and Judeo-Christian cosmologies is an essential aspect of Benoist's world view, which may preclude for him any critical examination of its underlying premises. This polarity comes up repeatedly in Benoist's denunciations of US, reputed to be the Judeo-Christian nation *par excellence*. All Americans are viewed anachronistically, as Puritans; in *Il Était une Fois l'Amérique*, Puritanism is raised to the status of being the quintessential Judeo-Christian religion.[7] In insisting on the Americans' unchanging Puritanism, Benoist, needless to say, ignores demographic realities, such as the fact that the areas in which the Puritans settled have been predominantly Catholic throughout most of this century. Benoist also confuses Puritans and other Calvinists with Quakers and Anabaptists. For a French Catholic, even a neo-pagan one, American Protestants may seem a strange and confusing lot as well as a constant source of social disorder.

Benoist, who began his political activities as an acolyte of the *Action Française*, no doubt views Calvinist countries as suspect because of their distance from classical, pagan civilization. Biblicism, the Protestant work ethic, Calvinist disenchantment of nature and the experience of individual salvation all come in for unkind comments in *Nouvelle Ecole*, and the US, whose founding is identified with distinctly Protestant characteristics, is considered least receptive to neo-pagan virtues. Never mind that the US has changed irreversibly since the Massachusetts Plantation

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-25; also typical of Benoist's anti-American outbursts are "L'Amérique c'est Carthage," in *Éléments*, No. 70 (Spring 1991), pp. 3-5; "C'est encore Loin, l'Amérique?" in *États-Unis: Danger* (Acts of the 25th GRECE Conference, 1992), p. 55; and "Vers l'Indépendance," in *Le Défi de Disneyland* (Paris: Labyrinthe, 1987).

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was established in the 17th century! Some original Protestant taint — what the Catholic Right in France used to call "*le mal parpaillot*" — is imagined as embedded in the American national character.

This Judeo-Christian pollution is seen as responsible for bag people, slavery, mistreatment of Indians, and the manipulations practiced by grasping stockbrokers. In *Il était une fois l'Amérique* there are pictures of early Protestant settlers and Congregationalist divines juxtaposed with those of the supposed victims of American society. Presumably a Protestant ectoplasm continues to operate, even with the disappearance of its creators and their believing coreligionists. This has resulted from the protean nature of the Judeo-Christian enemy; this ever-changing nature operates everywhere, even in opposition to itself. Benoist strains to show that the Jews and their Christian legatees teach both the racial elitism proclaimed by the Hebrews and the universal egalitarianism exalted by modern liberal Rabbis.

Benoist assumes that non-Judeo-Christian, particularly classical societies, behaved more humanely. All evidence to the contrary is brushed aside, e.g., Roman cruelty against Greeks, Carthaginians, Christians, Hebrews and Celts, the Athenians' extermination of the Melians, the Spartans' enslavement of their fellow Peloponnesians, or the boastful violence of the thoroughly Indo-European Hittites. If in fact many non-Judeo-Christian societies have behaved at least as brutally as the West after being occupied by a "foreign religion," perhaps the principal cause of this behavior should be sought in non-Judeo-Christian sources. Benoist can never quite bring himself to discuss this possibility, because of his need for a reductionist explanation. It is also foolish to believe that Judeo-Christianity became entrenched in European-American civilization, despite the opposed foundational beliefs and seminal myths of those who originally embraced that religion. Were there no bridges between pagan and Christian cultures? Did Europeans shed one identity completely before they assumed another?

Establishing causal relations, as opposed to all-embracing explanations, has never been Benoist's strong suit; and his preaching against America as the offscouring of Judeo-Christianity reveals the defects in his analytic method. This *idée fixe* gets in the way of some of his best perceptions: e.g., his focusing on the centrality of Jacobin and other progressivist democratic ideologies in fueling 19th century European imperialism. This well-documented connection, which the conventional Left has tried hard to keep from being discussed, is a pivotal point in a booklet Benoist wrote in 1986 as an argument for European-Third

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World solidarity — against the US.[8] Unhappily the kernel of truth gets lost in this tract, as Benoist falls back on comfortable banalities and applies them against the US: American Protestant culture, the IMF (allegedly controlled by America's bumptious imperialist population), and the American Military-Industrial Complex. All are blamed for the Third World's economic and political ills.

Along with Europeans, Third Worlders (if one may be allowed to use this problematic generic form) are shown to favor organic societies; and within these communities members share social responsibility and feel reverence for nature. Indeed everyone everywhere, except in the US, would live harmoniously and in touch with the cosmos, were it not for rapacious American imperialists. Though Benoist's tract appeals to a "Third Way" beyond the Soviet-American cleavage and the East-West condominium, America poses the greater cultural threat to Europe. He quotes Jean Cau about the need to avoid becoming like Americans in order not to resemble the Soviets, and cites another Americanophobe, Régis Debray, to the effect that "the only way to de-Sovietize the other Europe is to de-Americanize ours."[9]

This ritualistic anti-Americanism seems particularly dated at the end of the Cold War. Benoist's call to his fellow Europeans to make common cause with underdeveloped African, Asian, and Latin American peoples against the Soviet-American condominium no longer has relevance, except as a reflection of New Right hostility to the US. In the early 19th century, America provided a model for most of Europe on how a true federal republic functions. Distributed power, local self-government, and a characteristically Protestant-Calvinist sense of individual responsibility were all aspects of American identity that such foreign visitors as Tocqueville and Lord Bryce admired. It took half a century of managerial reconstruction under a strengthened central government and large corporations before the US acquired its new imperial identity. But this identity has no more to do with traditional America than Mitterand's France has to do with the world of Napoleon or Henry IV.

Frenchmen and Americans belong to the same civilization; and even those Americans who reject global democratic impostures think of

8. Alain de Benoist, *Europe, Tiers Monde, Même Combat* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1986), especially pp. 28-51. A similar argument about the link between 19th century imperialism and progressive thinking can be found in Lewis Feuer's *Imperialism and the Anti-Imperialist Mind* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1989).

9. *Ibid.*, p.16.

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themselves as Westerners. Unfortunately Benoist does not wish to grant Americans that right, though they are engaged with him in "*le même combat*," far more than the Third World, against the destroyers of distinctive political and cultural identities. His call for regional and local self-government resonates especially well among Americans; such government used to be *the* American tradition, long after it ceased to be that of royalist and then revolutionary France. As Tocqueville observed in the 1830s, there are two traditions of democracy, French Jacobinism and American localism. Now there is only one acceptable democratic tradition, the one that welfare state ideologists imported from Jacobin France and which current American conservatives as well as American liberals have tried to misrepresent as American.

It was not George Washington and James Madison but French revolutionaries and their Third Republic heirs who went around imposing the "rights of man." American republicans, by contrast, had no geopolitical interest outside their own hemisphere and generally felt no obligation to propagate revolutionary ideology. The Monroe Doctrine expressed the practical limits imposed on American statecraft. It would do well to contrast this doctrine's explicit denial of an ideologically motivated foreign policy to the justifications for national expansion produced in revolutionary France and during the French Third Republic. It is the US more than France that has been occupied by the "homogenizing globalists."

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*The Appeal to Vigilance by Forty Intellectuals**

[In their "Appeal to Vigilance," forty French and European intellectuals raise an alarm signal against "the far Right's current strategy of legitimation," believing that writers, publishers and those responsible for the written and audiovisual press do not adopt "the necessary opposition" to this strategy. This call, the complete text of which we are publishing here, is accompanied by the creation of an "Appeal to Vigilance" committee (54, Blvd. Raspail, 75006, Paris).]

We are worried about the resurgence of anti-democratic currents of the far Right in French and European intellectual life. We are concerned about the lack of vigilance and reflection on this topic. This is why some of us have started to meet regularly since January 1993 in order to exchange information and to delve more deeply into these questions.

The fact that ideologues of the far Right act as authors and publishers within anti-democratic and neo-Nazi networks is not new. But this activity is no longer sequestered in clandestine behavior. Its new visibility makes it easy to verify for anyone who wants to make the effort to find out about it.

But for some time now these same people have undertaken to make us believe they have changed. In order to do so, they have led a big seduction campaign targeting democratic personalities and intellectuals, some of whom are known as leftists. Badly informed about this activity or completely unaware of it, the latter have agreed to sign articles in some journals run by these ideologues. Once snared, these signatures apparently lend credence to the idea that the supposed change is a reality.

This campaign is not isolated. On the contrary, it is part of the current strategy of legitimation of the far Right which is using all the means at its disposal. This strategy benefits from increasing dialogues and debates concerning, for example, such issues as the end of ideology, the supposed disappearance of any political gap between the Left and the Right, the alleged resurgence of ideas concerning the nation and cultural identity. This strategy also feeds on the latest fashionable idea which denounces anti-racism as both "outmoded" and dangerous.

Writers, publishers, and those responsible for the written and audiovisual press do not yet appear to be sufficiently suspicious of these maneuvers. Because of lack of information or vigilance, or scruples about free speech, or a belief in unlimited tolerance, a good number of them (who are among the most respectable) today unintentionally engage in this operation of legitimation.

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Because of this involuntary complicity, we fear we shall soon see ideas which should be combatted because they threaten both democracy and human lives made commonplace in our intellectual life. We must not forget that the ideas of the far Right are not like those espoused by others ; they incite exclusion, violence and crime.

This is why in this month of July, 1993 we resolved to form a committee, "Appeal to Vigilance," with the task of collecting and disseminating as widely as possible all information useful for understanding the networks of the far Right and their alliances in intellectual life (publishing houses, the press, universities), and of taking public positions on all matters related to these questions.

We resolve to refuse all collaboration in journals, collective works, radio and television programs, as well as colloquia directed or organized by people whose connections with the far Right have been demonstrated.

It is clear that France is not the only European country in which these diverse strategies are developing. This is why we are calling for a vigilant Europe by asking anyone who approves of our initiative to sign this manifesto.

Signed by:

Miguel Abensour, Henri Atlan, Marc Augé, Lothar Baier, Norbert Bensaid, Yves Bonnefoy, Pierre Bourdieu, Georges Charpak, Claude Cohen-Tannudji, Michel Deguy, Jacques Derrida, Louis-René Des Forts, Georges Duby, Olivier Duhamel, Jacques Dupin, Umberto Eco, Arlette Farge, Lydia Flem, Nadine Fresco, Jacques Glowinski, Françoise Héritier, Yves Hersant, François Jacob, K. S. Karol, Jean-Marie Lehn, Nicole Loraux, Patrice Loraux, Charles Malamoud, André Miquel, Philippe Nozières, Maurice Olender, Michelle Perrot, Evelyne Pisier, Léon Poliakov, Jean Pouillon, Jacques Revel, Rossana Rossanda, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Lucy Vines, Paul Virilio.

*The Confusion of Ideas**

Roger-Pol Droit

Confronting the increasingly trivial ideas of the far Right, forty intellectuals appeal for a "vigilant Europe."

The alliances being renewed today between a few militant communists and

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neo-fascists should be taken seriously. They are, however, neither strange nor new. Aborted attempts to form a national Bolshevism have a long history. As for their actual influence, there is no need for concern; only a few dozen people are involved and some publications which are sometimes printed secretly. But, like a small tell-tale event, the alliance draws attention to a vast and more diffuse confusion which has taken over intellectual life in the last few years and has recently been growing. The danger of seeing such alliances develop in Europe should not be underestimated; they benefit particularly from the chaos which reigns in Russia, the racist murders proliferating in Germany, and the unforeseeable consequences of the war in the former Yugoslavia.

In the current state of affairs, nothing of the kind appears to threaten democracy in France. Nevertheless, dangerous tendencies do exist in our intellectual life. And here the danger is more insidious; the "Appeal to Vigilance" launched by forty intellectuals, which we are publishing today, encourages us to give it just as much attention. Three factors are conjoined. First, the confusion, which part of the far Right is attempting to provoke deliberately by covering up its tracks in the world of ideas. Second, the fact that this offensive takes place in an ideological climate clouded by a few fairly influential theoreticians who find it opportune to hold more or less alembic and ambiguous opinions about the problems of racism and anti-racism. Finally, there is the general atmosphere in the world of ideas, still influenced by the "anything goes" thinking and the cynicism of the 1980s. If we are not careful, all this could very well open the door to the worst tendencies.

The far Right has orchestrated the confusion for quite some time. Alain de Benoist has made it his specialty. In the past few years, he has tried to make people believe he has changed. By closeting his various activities, publicly taking Third World and anti-capitalist positions, refusing any labels, especially those of the Right and the Left, he has found many tactics for covering his tracks. And this works. "Everyone has the right to change," people say. "This is even a good thing," they think — without taking the trouble to see if the news is true.

Alain de Benoist is still actively and closely related to international movements on the far Right. Apart from the journal *Krisis*, his "liberal" face since 1988, he continues to edit *Nouvelle Ecole*, a mouthpiece of the New Right, whose editorial board includes, for example, Bernard Nottin, member of the scientific "council" of the National Front, and Jean-Claude Rivière, an advocate of the negationist thesis supported by Henri Roques in Nantes in 1985. His closeting strategy obviously is paving the way for political offensives. But he first has to dodge resistance; he must not confront head-on an intelligentsia which is still attached to the values of democracy. So Alain de Benoist contents himself with disseminating among intellectual circles, in an acceptable form, some of the favorite themes of both "non-conformist" thinkers in the 1930s and representatives of the "conservative revolution" in Germany: tradition, national identity, the refusal of universalism, the hatred of cosmopolitanism. The ideas of writers, whose literary or scientific fame and political positions mean they

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are not suspected of being compromised, are solicited on these refurbished themes. There is a double advantage: sensitive issues are reacclimatized, whereas participation in debates with respected thinkers makes one think the organizer is also respected.

The "Dialogue" with Alain de Benoist

This operation carried out in the journal *Krisis* undoubtedly would have failed ten years ago. This is no longer the case. Suspicion has given way to a kind of apathy. Some researchers who specialize in the analysis of racism have become so fascinated with the subject of their research that they help to obscure the struggles their work was originally supposed to make more effective through clarification. Pierre-André Taguieff's itinerary illustrates this second kind of confusion. In 1984, he condemned the "tactic of ideological scrambling systematically deployed by GRECE," and especially by Alain de Benoist. An article by Taguieff was published in the March-April 1993 issue of the journal *Esprit*, edited by Olivier Mongin. It concludes: "At the end of this analysis one is led to refuse any specificity to the processes and phenomena which are ordinarily characterized as 'racist.' The conceptual value of the term 'racism' has been found to be null and void and, consequently, must be avoided. It is designed to function only in polemical contexts where one wants to delegitimate one's adversaries. In this view, the word 'racism' is reduced to a delegitimating operative applicable to all the attitudes and behavior a person wants to denounce, condemn or combat." In short: do not believe that racism has the least reality; it is only an insult to be eliminated.

One does not have to be a genius to understand who benefits from such opinions. It is true that this researcher, head of an "anti-Semitism observatory," member of the socialist party, called on to speak whenever racism is an issue, already wrote in 1985 (Nr. 56) of the other New Right journal *Éléments*, also run by Benoist, that "today dialogue is possible" and concluded: "We are at a crossroads where the paths have not yet been marked." Today these paths are more than marked: a text co-signed by Taguieff and Benoist appeared in Florence in the publishing house La Roccia di Erec, edited by Marco Tarchi, a representative of the "New Right" in Italy.

Anti-Racism is Judged Dangerous

This Italian edition reprints part of the book called *Racismes, Antiracismes* (Méridiens-Klincksieck, 1986). Apart from the contributions of Taguieff and Benoist, a piece by André Béjin is also worth quoting: "By remaining ethnically and geopolitically European, by putting an end to self-mortification, Europe will be able to enrich other continents with its distinctive characteristics. The construction of a Europe of peoples is an exalted but arduous task. The anti-racism obsession will only complicate it needlessly and dangerously." No longer is racism the problem, but the movements opposed to it. This idea continues to make the rounds. "How is it possible to be anti-racist?" Taguieff asks

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in the previously mentioned *Esprit* article. He claims to want to understand the "*malaise*" affecting anti-racist struggles. People who consider racism to be without content also obviously consider anti-racism to be a red herring . . . These virtuosi dialectical games hardly explain how this empty word, which "racism" supposedly is, can kill so many people. The question is undoubtedly too simple to be pertinent. The last word on confusion carries the same idea further.

Anti-racism is not only more worrisome than racism, it is more injurious. This is what the sociologist Paul Yonnet tries to explain in his *Voyage au Centre du Malaise Français*, where he gives great support to Taguieff. Believing that SOS-Racism attacks "the image of a profound French homogeneity," deploring the fact that "the basis of national French civilization" is being shaken, considering that too much importance is given to the genocide of Jews by Nazis, this book probably would have succeeded really well with an audience of muscled militants were it not written in such obscure language. Digressions of this sort might have been ignored. But they were published in January, 1993 in the important journal *Le Débat* which Pierre Nora edits for Gallimard. In its May-August, 1993 (Nr. 75) issue, *Le Débat* devotes a dossier to the reactions this book provoked. By claiming to prefer "the courage of a sharp-shooter" to "the virtuous inconsistencies of official sociology," the editorial staff explains that the task of intellectuals is "to appeal to civic clarity, even and especially when it means upsetting feelings which appear to be well-founded and certainties considered to be well-established."

A Major Political Risk

If freedom of thought and criticism is essential, it is no less true that the obsession with anti-conformism, the passion for paradox, the will to pick fights with the "common people," the mania about never being duped by the opinions held by ordinary people, led some writers to make some seemingly innocuous gestures which makes the confusion of ideas even worse. In the end, the change in the general climate in the 1980s has greatly contributed to making this confusion a major political danger. As a kind of harbinger at the start of this decade, a few militants from the far Left rallied around those who tried to deny the existence of the gas chambers. As the years passed, many and varied factors have diminished the tradition of vigilance. Among them, the degradation of certain aspects of intellectual life deserve a long analysis. One would need to understand how public debate has been transformed into a spectacle, how the tendency of allowing everything to be said and of "discussing" instead of fighting became the rule. One would have to follow the itinerary of so-called thinkers looking for media exposure rather than coherence. One would also have to take into account the disillusionment brought about by socialist politics and by the growing prominence of the National Front on the public scene. Finally, one would also have to consider the repercussions of international events, from the fall of the Berlin Wall, to the ratification of the

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Maastricht Treaty, as well as the Gulf War. Each of these events has led to upheavals in former political and ideological divisions.

Many people have the feeling that today the cards have to be reshuffled. But for all that, is it also necessary to believe that the whole game has changed? What "civic clarity" demands is the very opposite of the confusion of ideas: firm principles and vigilance. Now as in the past.

*Intellectuals and "The Confusion of Ideas": A Serious Error in Analysis**

Pierre-André Taguieff

[In its July 13 issue, *Le Monde* published an appeal to vigilance by forty intellectuals, (including three Nobel Prize winners and thirteen members of the Collège de France) against the resurgence of the ideas of the far Right in European intellectual life. Since that time, hundreds of people, writing from France and other countries, have signed this manifesto. Many correspondents commend the initiative of the committee "Appeal to Vigilance" (54, Blvd. Raspail, 75006, Paris).

Roger-Pol Droit's article, "The Confusion of Ideas," which appeared at the same time as this collective text, also aroused a number of reactions. Here we are publishing the responses of Alain de Benoist and of Pierre-André Taguieff, a letter from Pierre Vidal-Naquet, opinions from readers, a collective text from researchers, as well as Droit's commentaries.]

1) The serious allegations brought against me by Roger-Pol Droit are based on a book "co-signed by Pierre-André Taguieff and Alain de Benoist" published in 1992 by a publishing house directed by Marco Tarchi, the key figure in the "New Right" in Italy. But if my name appears on the cover of this book, beside those of Alain de Benoist and André Béjin, it is without my consent, without a contract, and without my knowledge. I was also not informed by the French publisher of the collective work *Racismes, Anti-racismes* (Méridiens/

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Klincksieck, 1986), which reprinted my text. And I would not have given my authorization to publish a book so misleadingly allegorical (a "direct dialogue"!) had Mr. Tarchi asked me directly. I was faced with a *fait accompli*.

I would have complained immediately about an outfit or a movement which represented a real political danger. This is not the case for what remains of the "New Right" in Italy and in France. Only marginal intellectuals can be found there; they have opposed the parties of the far Right for a number of years. It is a serious error in analysis to see the main enemy in the independent publishing houses of political outfits and in journals of very limited circulation, whose "openness" has no other aim than to permit writers "marked" by the past to be integrated into a "legitimate" cultural area. Any other interpretation would evoke a kind of conspiracy theory (see my book on the *Protocoles des Sages de Sion*, Berg, 1992). This is why, for reputation's sake, I refuse to trade my work as a researcher for that of a full-time polemicist. This is not the first time I have been the victim of "pirating," especially in Italy (and not only by the "New Right").

Tarchi often reprints articles from various writers published in France in his journals (*Diorama Letterario*, *Transgressioni*) without always indicating their sources, just as *Krisis*, run by Benoist, sometimes "*forgets*" to indicate the sources of the texts reprinted. In this way, some unfortunate writers are transformed into "*collaborators*" with these journals and are assured of seeing their names thrown into the ring with zealous inquisitors. Would one go to such absurd lengths as to denounce Jean-Marie Vincent or Edgar Morin, whose names appear in Tarchi's recent publications, for ideological collusion?

Had he asked me, Droit could have avoided falling into one of the "*traps*" he criticizes.

2) Droit extracts from my texts the opposite of what I actually said. He thus quotes the first lines from the conclusion of a recent article (*Esprit*, March-April, 1993) in which I put forward the hypercritical position, which is not my own, on the concept of "racism": "In this view, the word 'racism' is reduced to a delegitimizing operative applicable to all the attitudes and behavior a person wants to denounce, condemn or combat." Droit interpolates: "In short: do not believe that racism has the least reality; it is only an insult to be eliminated."

Now the next sentence in my text, which Droit neglects to quote, contradicts this interpolation: "*It is nonetheless possible, based on the same analyses, not to reach the abrupt conclusion that the concept of racism is empty. It suffices . . . to say that racism is used in many senses.*" Then I recalled a number of small distinctions, introduced and illustrated in my work (see *La Force du Préjugé*, La Découverte, 1988). Far from having claimed that racism does not exist — an obvious absurdity — I illustrated its many manifestations in attitudes, social practices and ideological constructions. This is part and parcel of a scientific approach which I continue to believe is necessary despite the sarcasm of the "Poujadist" tradition which attacks conceptual work.

3) My tactical response to an inquiry on the "New Right" which appeared

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in *Éléments* (No. 56, Winter, 1985-6), considers its doctrine to be a "*differentialist racism*" and sees its future in a "*planetary apartheid*." I thus took on a political and intellectual adversary in a reasoned fashion. Droit, faithful to his interpretive "*metho*d," lifted the words "*possible . . . dialogue*" (thus following the editors of *Éléments*, who are responsible for the title of my text) from the following sentence: "Since I have had the dual position of observer-analyst and critic-polemicist with respect to the New Right for a number of years, I am responding to this inquiry insofar as a dialogue without complacency or superficial concessions seems possible to me today." My strategy consisted in taking the contradiction to the adversary in his fortress after having done so before the tribunals.

Cheap Shot?

This strategy may be discussed, but one may not accuse me of an ideological crime. It seems to me that the ideas put forward by GRECE should be fought in many ways but not by virtuous silence or prudent abstentions, with all the implied dangers. At the time, other academics and journalists also agreed to send their often extremely critical responses to this inquiry: Jean-François Kahn, Claude Julien, Claude Imbert, Michel Maffesoli and Jean-Michel Palmier. Have they also been compromised by this? In any event, as the current campaign shows, Benoist has not thereby been "legitimated."

As for the sentence "We are at a crossroads where the paths have not yet been marked," it referred to the possible divergences in the different trends in the "New Right," which has been divided by the "Le Pen effect," as well as the "international Left's" self-examination. With scissors and paste, the general "*we*" of an historical witness (of the type: "We are witnessing a libel campaign") is transformed into the particular "we" of the suspect couple, Benoist and myself! One can make a text "*confess*" anything . . .

4) Is it enough to establish that Paul Yonnet shows "*great support*" for me in his anti-racist pamphlet in order to prove an affiliation between his views and my critical analyses? Yonnet makes many tactical shows of support for many "*legitimizers*" (Raymond Aron, Fernand Braudel, etc.) and especially condemns as useless my attempt to reform anti-racism. I share with this writer neither his writing "*method*," nor his defense of a Catholic identity in a France supposedly threatened by an evil conspiracy, nor, of course, his destructive critique of anti-racism, which I have called "*exterminating*" in order to contrast it to the "*reformist*" critique which I recommend and practice as the collective work I headed shows: *Face au Racisme* (La Découverte, 1991).

5) Am I really "*fascinated*" by the object of my study? This polemical idea was put forward as early as 1984 by GRECE, using all the means at its disposal. Since then, it has been taken up by those who wanted to cast doubt on my work. On the contrary, I have dismantled the seductive machinery of neo-racism, which is connected to its "*differentialist*" and "*cultural*" reformulations. I am all the more upset in that I did not wait for the summer of 1993 to practice vigilance with respect to racism and the far Right. I have been combating

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them for fifteen years. There is something even more serious: to claim that by studying a suspect political phenomenon (such as racism) one is led to incorporate its values and norms is to cast dangerous suspicion, based only on principle, on a great deal of research.

6) One can certainly disagree with my work; it is of course open to debate, but then one should really debate it. One should begin by reading it neither between the lines nor in selected, collage-like, fragments. Settling scores is not political analysis. How could one be so wrong about who the enemy really is? In the course of this campaign, which is tearing the Left apart, the National Front is delighted, and the soft socialization of xenophobia has continued. Who, then, is benefiting from the cheap shot?

Quarrels of the Ancien Régime

Alain de Benoist

1) Since its inception in 1988, the journal *Krisis* has had the aim of redressing what seems to me a tragic absence of real intellectual debates. It has therefore published, and will of course continue to publish, contentious texts from authors of both the Right and the Left or from those who do not see themselves in either camp. I understand quite well that this procedure may seem "scandalous" to those who like nothing more than a single train of thought. I also understand that, using this kind of reasoning, they interpret the procedure as derived from obscure "legitimation strategies" which exist only in their minds. Based on a typical conspiracy theory and on decidedly McCarthyite language, they are now calling on the concept police and the tribunals of thought. Unfortunately, it is nothing new for "vigilantes" to practice lynching in the media or elsewhere.

I have sympathy for their obvious disarray : it is the clearest proof that they are no longer able to refute thinking which contradicts their pious beliefs. Their world is falling apart, and they still continue to believe they are capable of bestowing certificates of acceptable association! I willingly leave them with their quarrels of the *Ancien Régime*. Having only distrust for any form of intellectual "strategy," for my part I will continue to think of the work of thought as something which respects democratic principles and the most total freedom of the mind.

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2) My ideas, and those of many other intellectuals, have undergone a certain number of changes in the past thirty years. This evolution is reflected in my books and the articles. Roger Pol-Droit does not care. He reasons in an essentialist manner. He attributes to me feelings or ideas which I do not profess and which sometimes I even combat. He rallies around the McCarthyite principle of "guilt by association". In short, he knows better than I do what I think and, based on this trial by intention, he calls for a ban, for a *cordon sanitaire*, for exclusion. For my part, I am proud that I have never defended myself by using the methods adopted by those who attack me. I also know that I am the only intellectual today who is treated in this way. This "legitimation" is better than others.

A Dangerous Game

Pierre Vidal-Naquet

I always thought that Pierre-André Taguieff was playing a dangerous game by entering into dialogue with intellectuals from the New Right. Nothing indicates that they have made any profound changes. I told him this, and I say it again today, believing that he has been "trapped."

This said, one should not "confuse" this attitude with that of those intellectuals from the far Left who have not only, as Roger-Pol Droit says, "rallied" around those who have undertaken to deny the existence of gas chambers, but are the motivating element for this negation today. Now, on this point, Taguieff has never wavered and has contributed . . . to demystifying this abject little group . . .

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*The Words and the Facts**

Roger-Pol Droit

Commenting on the appeal to vigilance in Europe, "The Confusion of Ideas" article [*Le Monde*, July 13, 1993] refers to some of the disparate factors conjoined in French intellectual life. First, Alain de Benoist's attempt to cover his tracks with his journal *Krisis*. Then, the ambiguous consequences of the criticisms devoted to anti-racism in the work of Pierre-André Taguieff, which are more pronounced in Paul Yonnet. Finally, in the background, the disillusionment, cynicism and international upheavals inherited from the 1980s. Recalling some of these points may forestall future misunderstandings.

Alain de Benoist emphasizes the "changes" in his thought. This is not what is at issue here. What matters are his continued connections with the National Front and the international network of those nostalgic for Nazism. Some facts. Behind the show-case *Krisis*, there are two other journals Benoist has run for quite some time. The patronage and editorial committees include members of the "scientific council" of the National Front (Jean Haudry, Jean Varenne, Pierre Vial) and those who deny the gas chambers (Jean-Claude Rivière and Bernard Notin, who is also a member of the National Front). In addition, in 1991, when he published a collection of poems by Maurice Rollet, founder of GRECE, Benoist celebrated the Tower of Jul. This object, which he has admired for a long time ("archaic Jul-Joel . . . , festival from the dawn of ages, spontaneous, almost instinctive," *Éléments*, January 1977), was on sale during the GRECE colloquium in 1992. René Monzat has demonstrated that this object was part of SS rituals (*Le Monde*, July 3, 1993).

In an obituary devoted to Herbert Jankuhn, published in *Nouvelle Ecole* in the fall of 1990, Benoist reminds us that Jankuhn, who was "imprisoned in 1945 and would only be set free in 1948," is one of the "patrons" of this journal. He forgets, however, to specify that this is the same *Sturmbannführer SS* who gave his name to the *Sonderkommando* Jankuhn which Himmler entrusted with the archeological raids of occupied Europe.

In Tübingen, Germany, the publishing house Grabert is known for its neo-Nazi and negationist publications like Wilhelm Stäglich's *Le Mythe d'Auschwitz*. Charged by German courts for inciting racial hatred, Wigbert Grabert, a former collaborator with Alfred Rosenberg, minister reponsible for the Eastern territories in the Third Reich, published five books by Benoist between 1982 and 1986. In 1990, the latter edited with Wolfgang Strauss, a representative of

* Originally published in *Le Monde* (July 27, 1993). Translated by Deborah Cook.

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the far Right, a book by Grabert on *La Grande Allemagne*. In 1992, Grabert announced a biography of the painter Wilhelm Petersen (whom Himmler invited to work on a monument in honor of Reinhard Heydrich) by Benoist. This work will appear in 1993 under the name of Uwe Christiansen in a collection edited by Benoist. The facts are carefully selective but they are stubborn. Some of the people who collaborated on the journal *Krisis* were obviously unaware of these details. It would be improper to complain to them and ludicrous to think them complacent. Everyone can be fooled. It is something else, however, to recognize this, as Jean-Pierre Vernant did, by signing the appeal to vigilance.

Should one pursue a dialogue with those who dream of the return of barbarism? Taguieff chose dialogue without wishing to indicate complacence, and Vidal-Naquet saw this as "a dangerous game." Renowned theorist, Taguieff has published many studies on racism and anti-racism, which *Le Monde* generally took into account. It goes without saying that his works deserve to be read and discussed seriously. The few sentences in the July 13 article by no means claim to list all of his work but to indicate the ambiguity in some of his ideas.

Has Racism Really Changed?

First, Taguieff was one of the first to attempt an analysis of "*the strategy of the New Right in France*." In 1984, he dismantled the mechanisms of "*subversion*", *infiltration* , and the "*effects of seduction*" practiced by this movement as well as their political implications in *Vous avez dit fascismes?* The following year he wrote an article, which the editor entitled "Le dialogue est aujourd'hui possible," for the journal *Éléments*, run by Benoist, in order to contribute to a "dialogue without complacence or superficial concessions." In this text, Taguieff wrote: "The New Right has helped to disqualify popular egalitarianism. Mainstay of the dominant ideology, the terrorist utopia of standardization will not appear as part of the common horizon (not including communist verbiage) in the future." Does this sentence "take the contradiction to the adversary in his fortress," or does it serve instead to legitimate him?

The fact that Taguieff's name appears with that of Benoist on the cover of a work published in Florence last year without his consent confirms that the New Right is given to trickery of this kind from one end of Europe to the other. It is more difficult to understand why he did not think it necessary to protest this publicly before becoming Benoist's full-time advocate. As for the analysis of racism and anti-racism, the main contribution of Taguieff is to have shown that the problems are more complex than is normally believed, especially since a "neo-racism" has emerged beside the old biological ideologies which refers to the ideas of cultural identity and the right to difference. The disagreement here concerns the extent of the change and the danger of underestimating the survival of a biological racism. It also concerns the constructive character of the critique of anti-racism which Taguieff has often stressed and which one might, on the contrary, consider paralyzing. Apart from these disagreements, one still finds the classical debate about the freedom from all prejudice necessary for

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researchers in the social sciences and from the unavoidable repercussions of their analysis. Distance from the subject matter, detailed and unrestrained critique, are required for their work, even and especially when they are researching areas where there are sharp confrontations. But words do not belong to a heaven of ideas. Whether one will or no, words have ramifications with respect to the facts.

*A Letter from Alain de Benoist**

Having been indicted again by Mr. Roger-Pol Droit, I want to make the following response.

To date I have been published by about twenty publishing houses with a variety of opinions. Droit chose one which served his purposes, in this case one of my German publishers, Wigbert Grabert. He claims to believe that an author necessarily shares the ideas of those who publish him or those of the authors published along with him. He insists that this publisher, who was not even three years old in 1945, is a "former collaborator of Rosenberg" (sic). He claims that I agreed to direct "a work on *la grande Allemagne*" with this publisher. This is a pure and simple lie. (I, of course, challenge him to produce such a document.) He incriminates a book, which appeared in a collection I direct, on a German painter whom he falsely accuses of having been "invited to work on a monument in honor of Heydrich." I challenge him to find even one complacent line in favor of Nazism in this book.

Droit also indicts the memory of one of the most famous archeologists of this century, Herbert Jankuhn who, along with about three hundred other people with varying opinions, was a member of the patronage committee for the journal *Nouvelle Ecole*. Among other things, he accuses Jankuhn of "archeological raids in occupied Europe." I challenge him to find one document to support this fiction. Droit obviously does not know (or does not want to know) that after the war the examination carried out on this subject concluded that there were no grounds for prosecution. Since 1949, Jankuhn has received the highest official honors both in Germany and elsewhere. I can make the list available to him. In France, Simon Kalifa, member of the *Centre d'Études Supérieures et de Recherche* on ethnic relations and European racism at the University of Paris XIII, "praised the prudence, the objectivity, the talent, and the tenacity of Herbert Jankuhn" (*Études germaniques*, 1957, p. 361).

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* After the publication of Roger-Pol Droit's article "The Words and the Facts" (*Le Monde*, July 17), Alain de Benoist wrote the following letter, which was printed in *Le Monde* (July 31, 1993). Translated by Deborah Cook.

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Droit claims to stick to the "facts." He has only tiny ones, which he choses as he likes. He prefers to speak of books I have not written rather than those I have published. He considers null and void the hundreds of pages I have devoted to the critique of racism and xenophobia, nationalism and social Darwinism. He claims I have "connections" with the National Front, but its press regularly drags me through the mud for having declared publicly that the opinions of this movement, especially those concerning immigration, disturbed me. In short, he uses the method Americans call "start with a conclusion." It consists in excluding from the start all the facts which contradict the thesis one wants to support.

Roger-Pol Droit's Reply:

The Grabert publishing house in Tübingen has claimed to be revisionist for a number of years. It has published works which deny the existence of gas chambers like *Le Mythe d'Auschwitz*. "Revisionism" is featured explicitly among the axes of its editorial politics on the cover of its catalogue. Former Nazis publish in it. So does Alain de Benoist, who is the director of a collection.

The current publisher, Wigbert Grabert, took over from his father, Herbert Grabert, in 1978. The latter, a representive of the racist "*völkish*" movement, considered National Socialism to be a new religion, destined to replace all others. He really worked for the Ministry of the Eastern Territories, headed by the Nazi Rosenberg from 1941-45 (see Kurt Tauber's work, *Beyond Eagle and Swastika: German Nationalism since 1945*, Wesleyan University Press, 1967, pp. 533-34).

Benoist was not in fact director of the work entitled *Gedanken aus Grossdeutschland,* published in 1990 under the direction of Stefan Ulbrich, not by Grabert but by Arun, editor of Bavière. He collaborated in this work, which notably includes contributions by Wolfgang Strauss, a figure on the far German Right, and from Marcus Bauer, in the "national Bolshevik" movement.

In the collection he directs in Grabert, Benoist edits a work devoted to the painter Wilhelm Petersen, author of work devoted to transmitting Nazi values in images. The work comprises two hundred illustrations. As for the letter from Himmler to Petersen concerning a monument honoring Heydrich, it is mentioned in the book by Joseph Wulf, *Die Bildeden Künste im Dritten Reich* (Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1963, p. 180).

As for the archeologist Herbert Jankuhn, former non-commissioned SS officer who was a member of the patronage committee of the journal *Nouvelle Ecole*, many facts about his behavior and his raids are found in the reference work by Michael H. Kater, *Das "Ahnenerbe" der SS, 1933-45* (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1974). The author of this study on the cultural institute of the SS shows, especially on pages 156 and 157, how Jankuhn and his *Sonderkommando* visited Russian museums after an offensive, on the pretext of "protecting" works of art, by sending them to Berlin.

Simon Kalifa's 1957 statement in *Études germaniques* does not at all concern the behavior of Jankuhn during the war. It is part of a brief review of a work by this

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archeologist, which appeared in 1955 and tells of the diggings which took place in German territory. The sentence Benoist cites is taken out of context, where it is a question of scientific method.

*The Summer of the Dinosaurs: Violent Press Campaign Against the New Right**

Charles Champetier

Dinosaurs were in fashion this summer. Not only those kindly beasts from antediluvian times, but the dinosaurs of thought also got together. The aim was to organize a press campaign to demonize non-conformist thinkers and then to demand even more drastic restrictions of free speech in France. But this time the censors went a little too far.

First Balance

"When the Far Right Stretches in Communist Waters." This is the title of an article in *Le Canard Enchaîné* of June 23, 1993 which lit the fuse. There followed in quick succession: an article by Jean-Paul Cruse, a militant CGT for *Libération*, in *L'Idiot international* titled "Toward a National Front"; a few provocative formulations by Jean-Edern Hallier, most prominently in the columns of the *National Hebdo* in June, 1991 — note the timeliness of the scoop; the collaborations of Edward Limonov, fellow traveler of the French Communist Party (hereafter: PCF), in *Choc du Mois*; Alain de Benoist's participation in the work of the Institut de recherches marxistes on May 12, 1992; and the participation of Marc Cohen, general editor of *L'Idiot international* and member of the PCF, in a conference organized by our journal *Éléments* in May, 1992. Finally, for good measure, there were a few "anti-Semitic slips" by the singer Renaud in *Charlie Hebdo* and by his brother, Thierry Schan, in *Choc du Mois*.

So our gossipy colleagues, seeing the summer approach — and the inevitable dry-mindedness which always accompanies it — decided to turn to the favorite sport of pen-wielders without ideas: denunciation. What is the source of this disparate collection of old scoops, accidental slips, and useless collusion? It is

* Originally published in *Éléments*, No. 78 (September 1993, pp. 13-18. Translated by Deborah Cook.

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a book by Didier Daeninckx, a distinguished author of detective novels who is close to the PCF. For Daeninckx, there is little difference between a detective novel and a political novel. Professional deformation entails responsibility. Daerninckx has published a real serial novel in the great French tradition — there are the good guys (the progressive forces), the bad guys (Nazis, Stalinists, and anti-Semites), an infamous plot (a gigantic National-Bolshevik galaxy which spreads its red and brown shadow from Paris to Moscow), traitors (Arnaud Spire, Marc Cohen, et al.), a madman (Jean-Edern Hallier), a bastard (Jean-Paul Cruse), and a cynical mercenary (Edward Limonov). Of course, it must all end with a final settling of scores, bloody but just. So also will the summer press campaign.

The Delirious Campaign

Le Canard enchaîné does not want to gossip all by itself. Two specialists in the resuscitation of old news, Edwy Plenel and Olivier Biffaud, decided to take up the issue and to amplify it. In its inimitable (and fortunately not imitated) style, the Jesuit newspaper announced (in a column on the first page, thank you very much) "Three Frightful Stories for Our Wayward *fin de siècle*." The incriminating facts are the same. They feature Benoist's trip to Russia in March, 1992. From this point on, *Le Monde* speaks of "revelation" and "temptation" (note how our Torquemadas of the fountain pen give religious language a singular value). *Libération* fell in step as well. Having just celebrated its 20th anniversary, the newspaper's long march toward bourgeois respectability was spoiled suddenly by a provocative trouble maker. Serge July, who had not been in the factories for a long time, took the opportunity to take a shot at his workers. He demanded the resignation of Jean-Paul Cruse based on an outrageous position from the editorial board. Screaming matches in the hallways of *Libération* offices were translated into a dozen articles of collective self-flagellation in which the newspaper lamented having nourished in its bosom such a horrible beast. Nevertheless, our good Serge took much more original positions on free speech in France ten years ago.

The "affair" had thus begun. Thereafter, in quick succession and at breakneck speed, there appeared at least a hundred articles (not counting those in the foreign press) inspired by the demonic threat of National-Bolshevism. Brief encounters became *rapprochements*, which started flirtations, which indicated trends, which became a galaxy. Although Nazism died in 1945 and Communism in 1989, it appears that France, Europe and the entire Free World are suddenly at the mercy of an implacable red and brown network. *Globe-Hebdo* — the "useful weekly" — saw a good "buy" in all this on June 3rd. While waiting for money from benefactors and government officials, the caviar-Left resuscitates fascist networks. The *Globe* has had mass bombing in its blood since the Iraqi affair. To begin with, Benoist rubs elbows with Limonov, [Jacques] Doriot, [Joseph] Goebbels and Hitler no less. Then in quick succession the blind pens of Elie Léo and René Monzat took shots at: a sizable portion of the

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political office of the National Front, which is added to the National Communist plot; Alain Sanders of *Présence*, Roland Gaucher of *National-Hebdo*, Benot Bartherotte of the naval yards of *La Ciotat*, and even, for the grande finale that indestructible Léon Degrelle.

As befits its rank, *Le Figaro* only lends money to the rich. In an astounding article on July 1, 1993, Muriel Frat disclosed the secret — the old red-brown alliances are fully armed to combat market democracies because they would have at their disposal a "war chest of several million dollars deposited in secret bank accounts." One wonders why the journalist uses the conditional tense to affirm this truth known to everyone. This famous National-Bolshevik war chest is only that of the SS, deposited in Vatican bank accounts, to which only Paul Touvier's half-sister has the access code.

Bernard-Henri Lévy, fortified with assurances from fifteen years of professional anti-fascism and seven minutes in a bar at the Sarajevo airport, called his colleagues "naive" in *Le Point* on July 3. In one of his notebooks, the old "*philosophe nouveau*" and new husband gives up the key to the mystery. According to him, the red-brown conspiracy has existed ever since the Proudhon circle. To refresh your memory, this circle was established on the fringes of the *Action Française* in 1911 — six years before the birth of Soviet Communism and twenty-one years before Hitler took power. We will allow ourselves the luxury of providing the left-bank prophet with our own interpretation. Has not the national community alliance existed since . . . Plato, who was the first to link the idea of preservation with the equalization of human communities? In which case, not only "French ideology" but even "European philosophy" would lead straight to Auschwitz. Think about this, dear Bernard-Henri. This is the stuff of advertising copy dear to the heart of our century at its end.

Bertrand-Poirot-Delpech-from-the-*Académie Française* — Poirot to his friends — on July 7 laid the blame on the blindness. . . of intellectuals in *Le Monde*. In his view, they feed on the illusion of combating a dominant ideology which exists only in their nightmares. One must put an end to the "legend of the omnipotent *doxa*." Nevertheless, Poirot reminds us that there really was a stifling conformism at the time. But when? In the 1930s of course. Then the dominant ideology — the only ideology, the true ideology, that of others — was hatred of democracy, of Jews, of the rabble, of revolution, of the Enlightenment, etc. And all this led to the horror, as everyone knows. This academic watchdog supports his limpid prose with a shocking proof. With reference to the reprinting of *Modérés*, he quotes Abel Bonard: "Thinking is not done collectively." Where does this rather anodyne and ultimately common sense remark lead? To individuals? To intellectualism? Not at all. It is supposed to legitimate . . . revision in them. Magnificent Poirot. In order to call into question the existence of a dominant ideology, he turns himself into the indispensable purveyor of the gross clichés and worn-out banalities of our age.

But Poirot-Delpech is not entirely wrong about the blindness of some people, even though one must understand this in the proper sense. Thus, Jean-Edern

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Hallier, decried by the well-meaning press, could fabricate nothing better than the following excuse — struck blind by implacable fate, he was unable to read the copy for his journal. The frightful Marc Cohen, assisted by Cruse and Limonov, benefitted from this by organizing a *putsch* and passing out humiliating articles. The guilty party was fired. Thierry Schan did much the same thing when he attacked Marc Cohen in his monthly *Interview*. One does not always have the courage of one's reputation. Jean-Edern Hallier should take heart. Francette Lazard, cadre in the PCF for the IRM's Marxist get-togethers was equally shortsighted. The hostess thought she had invited Jean-Marie Benoist (who also had been dead for years) instead of Alain de Benoist. The least one can say is that twenty years of education in Party schools have given Franchette a singular command of revolutionary dialectics.

Settling Scores

These ridiculous evasions must not conceal the crux of the matter. In fact, Biffaud and Plenel benefitted from the National-Bolshevik illusion by settling some scores. First, with the *L'Idiot International* which, a few weeks earlier, mocked the liberated morals of Josyane Savigneau, who is responsible for the book pages of the daily newspaper on Falguire Street. By denouncing *L'Idiot international* as a laboratory for totalitarian alliances, *Le Monde* succeeded in discrediting it in the eyes of its associates at the same time as Bernard Tapie tried to destroy it with legal and financial maneuvers. For that fateful organ of Social Democratic propaganda which *Le Monde* has become, it was a question of marginalizing the hard-line tendencies of the PCF in order to revitalize the minorities ready to ally themselves with a socialist party in complete collapse. Biffaud and Plenel played the hand of the likes of Fiterman and Herzog by exploiting subtly the internal divisions in the Party (particularly between Guy Hermier and Jean-Paul Jouary, respectively the director and general editor of *Revolution*).

The PCF determined to adopt a mitigating attitude. In the June 30 issue of *L'Humanité*, Arnaud Spire denounced any idea of collusion between the communists and the far Right. But the author of the editorial did not fail to recognize "bad faith" and "political goals" in Biffaud's and Plenel's opinions. He particularly objected to the abandonment of the theme of the nation "which has by far not exhausted its capacity to justify itself and its potential for creativity." Spire concluded: "Democracy and the clash of ideas have still not reached the point of losing their power in France." Paradoxically, the PCF is attacked for its new pluralism by the very same people who accuse it of Stalinism. If Biffaud and Plenel are impassioned by red-brown alliances, their editorial board should give them money for a trip to Russia. Archives are currently in the process of revealing the collusion between the PCF and the German occupiers in 1940 and 1941, everything from the demand that *L'Humanité* be published again to the emphatic words of Jacques Duclos on the "social dimension" of Nazism.

The third and last *Le Monde* target is the New Right in general and the journal *Krisis* in particular. An explanatory letter by Benoist was published in *Le Monde*

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on June 30. In response Biffaud and Plenel deployed standard arguments attacking intentions, amalgamations and abridgements. They reproached Benoist for planning to publish an anthology including the work of Charles Maurras, Abel Bonnard, Robert Brasillach and Jules Soury under the heading "*Les Grands Classiques de l'Homme de Droit*." Out of twenty authors, who include representatives of the liberal or republican Right, they focus only on those from the "far" Right. Moreover, *Le Monde* assumes a close ideological complicity between Benoist and all the titles published under his name, in which case, he would have the dubious distinction of being at once counter-revolutionary and liberal, a Maurrasian, a Barrésian, a personalist, a Sorelian and a Gaullist.

In support of their contention, Biffaud and Plenel then quote "two recent studies" which are supposed to thwart the horrible beast. What are these studies? First, a text which appeared in *Celcius*, a far Left Belgian journal known for its close relations with the Sûret d'outre-Quiévran and no longer published. Second, a text by Maurice Olender, which appeared in the magazine *L'Histoire* (apparently, official history) playing on the old refrain of the Indo-European racism of the New Right. When this obscure text appeared, *L'Histoire* received a writ of rejoinder refuting Olender's assertion. Of course, this writ was not published, which is as it should be in our pseudo-democracy.

Finally, Biffaud and Plenel supported their arguments with a quote from Alain Caillé taken out of context in an article in *Revue du Mauss*, No. 13. Let us quote this writer and include the passages which our two bloodhounds prefer to censor. Caillé wrote the following to Benoist: "What strikes me most in the many critical studies written about and against you is that they create an imaginary enemy and attribute to you a number of positions which you have never taken or which you have not held for a long time. For example, they confuse you with your three former friends from the Club de l'Horloge, who represent an ultra-liberal, hard Reagan-Thatcherite, ultra-utilitarian rightist position, whereas you have always opposed such a position. They accuse you of biologism, although you are one of the main critics of naturalism and Darwinism, and a supporter of culturalism and radical historicism. They think you are a racist, whereas your study on racism published in *Racismes, Antiracismes* (Paris: Méridiens-Klincksieck, 1986) is perhaps the most anti-racist of all the works in this collection. They imagine you are a fierce nationalist, although *Krisis* (No. 5, April 1990) contains not only an article by Taguieff but one by Bernard Chantebout that is one of the most virulent and forceful critiques of the idea of the nation. In short, they think you are a Le Pen fanatic, although you cannot find strong enough words to denounce him and have reproached him for going off in the four directions you believe characterize the Right — liberalism, moralism, integrationism and racism" (*Revue du Mauss*, No. 13, p. 95). At the time, Benoist simply replied: "Those who criticize me will do so even after having read me, and they will reproach you for having allowed me to speak."

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Here is "Nazi Paganism"

Murky National-Bolshevism was only the first stage in a stand-up fight against the New Right. The second stage was a full-page article titled "The SS Ritual of the New Right," signed by René Monzat, in the July 3 issue of *Le Monde*. As is usual with Monzat, the article is imbued with his terminal conspiracy fixation. (*Globe Hebdo* and *L'Evénement de Jeudi* had already rejected this sensational article and *Le Monde* followed suit.) Monzat's opinions have a biblical simplicity. Accordingly, the Tower of Jul is the "deep-seated foundation" of the New Right. The Tower was used by the SS sixty years ago; thus the New Right is Nazi. This is what had to be proved. Monzat uses a terra cotta object to judge an intellectual movement. He believes he can make an "ideological" argument out of a Christmas candle holder which has been used for centuries in half of Europe and which all Swedish families know as a *Jullykta*.

Monzat is really a special case. Famous for bashing imaginary discourses, he also indulges in them, as this press campaign clearly demonstrates. In *L'Evénement de Jeudi* (July 8-14) one can read his analysis of the Left-Right rapprochement, which, though riddled with errors, is at least polite. In *Le Monde* one finds a second level of discourse, where he gives in to conspiracy theories. Finally, in *Globe Hebdo* (July 7-17) he undertakes a third level of discourse. Here he is more reserved — Monzat the priest excommunicates, condemns and builds a funeral pyre in thirty lines. *Nouvelle Ecole* is a "negativistic" journal and Benoist has "devoted his life to defending the theoreticians of racial hatred." The expression of this delirious opinion will likely land *Globe Hebdo* in court.

The problem is that Monzat has peculiar work habits. In *Éléments* apparently he only considers images. From the last six issues, which at least included some substantive files, he kept only his small stylized letter representing a death rune. The reason is simple. Like Jean-Edern Hallier and Francette Lazard, Monzat is losing his sight. Decoding is really his specialty. This exacts a triple effort from him. The first time he understands nothing, whereby the New Right does not correspond to his preconceived idea of it. Then he reads the second time and does not always believe his eyes. Finally, a luminous revelation occurs, whereby every text is coded and reserved for initiates in the Great Conspiracy. Thereafter, René takes up his glass eye and miraculously reads *between the lines*. Everything becomes clear. Then he carefully files away the fruit of his labors and runs to *Le Monde*'s editorial board to sell his prose. Worn out! God is paying him back for his efforts. There is no doubt that by reading between the lines what has never been written, he will soon lose his sight completely.

Monzat's article, which made no headlines in the press, was in fact only the beginning of the third stage of the campaign. *Le Monde* denounced the "confusion of ideas" and published a "call to vigilance with respect to the increasing triviality of the ideas of the far Right," signed by forty intellectuals. In the same issue, Roger-Pol Droit (Pol Pot to his friends) published a long article in which he denounced Taguieff, Benoist and Paul Yonnet. Their crimes? The first dared to criticize anti-racism with as much intelligence as he denounced

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racism (he even went so far as to initiate a "dialogue" with the New Right). The second is charged with remaining what he always was and always will be no matter what (it is well-known that on the Left one evolves and on the Right one dissimulates). The third is accused of having carefully analyzed the manipulation and instrumentalization of anti-racism by the Left in power,

But it is the text of the "call to vigilance" which merits special attention. Denouncing a hypothetical attempt at legitimation led by the extreme Right, it declares: "Writers, publishers, and those responsible for the press in general do not yet seem to be sufficiently suspicious of these maneuvers. Owing to a lack of information, a lack of vigilance, to scruples about free speech (*sic*) or to a belief in unlimited tolerance (again *sic*), a good number of them (who are among the most respectable) today participate in this attempt at legitimation unknowingly." Since "the far Right is not simply discussing a few ideas but in fact inciting exclusion, violence and crime," anything that destroys them is legitimate. The problem with this "call to vigilance" is that the "far Right' is never defined. But if the text is unclear about its target, it is quite clear about the means to be employed to combat it — deprive the suspects of free speech and ghettoize certain ideas considered dangerous by this squadron of Parisian fanatics. This is the perfect example of the "wayward democracy" mentioned in *Le Monde*. No more contradiction but interdiction. No more debate but denunciation. The jailers and executioners have gotten together for the bicentennial of the Terror. Those who instigated the "call to vigilance," Maurice Olender and Nadine Fresco, did not hesitate to draw a *cordon sanitaire*. Lists of people suspected of having "sympathy for the New Right" today circulate among editorial boards and Parisian publishing houses. The aim is to stop the publication of these writers at all costs. On July 27 *Le Canard Enchaîné* handed over the lists of "intellectuals who agreed to collaborate on the journal *Krisis* from 1988 to 1993" to the public vendetta.

Too bad. The censors went too far. Way too far. First, many of those who signed the "call to vigilance" now feel they were entrapped. They were contacted by telephone and asked to sign an "anti-fascist petition," the text of which they had not seen. This is why all over Paris there are bitter recriminations against Vichinsky's new rivals and shocking recollections about the "return of sectarianism." Second, in his vindictive article Droit denounced not only Benoist but also Paul Yonnet, Taguieff and the journal *Le Débat*. Taguieff responded immediately by organizing a counter-appeal (from "the thirty") with the aim of reminding people that freedom of research is a fundamental principle of the social sciences. He also emphasized that Droit's citation from one of his texts was definitely taken out of context. Third, during its five-year existence the journal *Krisis* has published a dozen issues in which thinkers of all stripes have been allowed to express ideas freely and without redress, taking positions which obviously have nothing to do with the far Right. Any sensible reader — any reader whose thinking is not blurred by fixed ideas — will recognize this. Today many people know what to believe in all areas.

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This press campaign, and especially the "call to vigilance" have evidenced distinct fracture lines on the Left. At the beginning of the affair, concerning National-Bolshevism, Alain Finkielkraut stated in *Le Point* (July 3): "Some people on the *Globe Hebdo* and elsewhere would like to see only two alternatives; fascism or the rule of money. They are wrong." In *L'Evénement du Jeudi* (July 8-14), Serge Maury (a.k.a. Jean-François Kahn) insisted: "Functional alliances should not be confused . . . with debates on ideas, pluralist colloquia, even occasional or chance meetings . . . . Here it is appropriate to mistrust certain generalizations which really hide secret intentions. . . .Some people have developed their own conservative agendas designed to solidify dogmatic enclosures, to cement asphyxiating divisions, and to block all innovative 'cross-current' approaches in the name of a neo-conformism designed to assure the continued existence of the established ideological powers." This journalist who denounced "a kind of McCarthyism of the Left," called for "innovative, liberating junctures."

Bernard Langlois went further. In *Politis* (July 29) he wrote: "I would not hesitate, if the opportunity arose and in the same circumstances, to allow my work to be reprinted again in *Krisis*, where I cannot recall ever reading any anti-Semitic texts or any texts expressing the ideology of the far Right, against which I have been fighting. It is well-known that 'one needs a long spoon to eat with the devil.' Is Benoist the devil? Apparently he is for some. But not for me. Whatever the case may be, I intend to remain the judge both of those who eat with me and of the length of my table cloths." Finally, Jacques Julliard explained in *Nouvel Observateur* (August 15-19): "I have never collaborated with the journal *Krisis* . . . . I have, however, agreed, as I always do, to allow this journal to reprint one of my *Nouvel Observateur* articles. If I did so, it was to avoid any ambiguity. But in light of the purifying zeal of some, I will end up regretting the fact that I abstained [from collaborating]. . . . As for the 'vigilant' forty, I admit that I would have preferred that they were a little more vigilant about the racist crimes in Bosnia and Croatia. All this is a little sad, and even a little farcical."

The conflict between the center and the periphery, has finally found a good illustration in this summer affair. The new divisions really pit the innovators against the cement mixers, the thinkers against the censors, the announcers against the denouncers, audacious ideas against frivolous backsliders. Big ideological mutations are always fatal to the dinosaurs of thought. Their final vindictive twitching is also their last death rattle.

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*Appeal To Vigilance**

It was a year ago today that an appeal was made for a vigilant Europe in *Le Monde* (July 13, 1993). At that time the forty people who signed the manifesto wrote: "We are worried about the resurgence of anti-democratic currents of the far Right in French and European intellectual life." In the weeks that followed, a voluminous correspondance answered this appeal. It expressed concern, support and determination (see Arlette Farge's analysis in *Le Monde* on November 24, 1993). Since then, nothing has happened that would call into question the fears expressed in the manifesto. On the contrary, public opinion has increasingly floundered under the combined effect of the economic crisis, unemployment, social exclusion, and a generalized suspicion about the political world. The immediate danger is not the appearance of fascisms already known but the insidious perversion of thought which seriously corrupts democratic regimes, creating the conditions for a new fascism. The fight against such a threat makes reflection even more necessary and imperative than ever, inasmuch as it is true that "thought is perpetual vigilance" (Umberto Eco, *Le Monde*, October 4, 1993). Sponsored by the Collège International de Philosophie and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and hosted by the Maison des Ecrivains, a seminar was held in Paris from December 1993 to June 1994 during which the many participants debated these questions.[1] This common concern in the face of the threat and this shared engagement against all the far Right's forms of legitimation and assurances explain why more than one thousand five hundred signatures have been added to the "Appeal to Vigilance." They come from all over France, but also from Germany, Belgium, Italy during this especially worrisome year in Europe. To publish these signatures today is to emphasize, if this is necessary, the reality and the gravity of the danger. It also bears witness to our resolute will to oppose it.

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* Originally published as an advertisement in *Le Monde* (Wednesday July 13, 1994). Translated by Deborah Cook.

1. Especially participating in this seminar were: Alexandre Adler, Lother Baier, Yves Bonnnefoy, Michel Deguy, Oliver Duhammel, Arlette Farge, Nadine Fresco, Françoise Héritier-Augé, Nicole Laraux, Patrice Loraux, Maurice Olender, René Monzat, Patrick Moreau, Rossana Rossanda, Jean-Pierre Vernant.

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*Origins and Metamorphoses of the New Right An Interview with Pierre-André Taguieff**

Vingtième Siècle: Who was part of the New Right's audience during the 1980s?

Pierre-André Taguieff: GRECE claimed to have 2500 full members in 1985-86. There were between 5000 and 8000 people in the movement (these figures come from Alain de Benoist and are collated with others, but they seem exaggerated). Since 1978-79 GRECE's annual "national" colloquia have been based on particular themes.[1] They drew from 700 to 1200 people (the proceedings were published afterwards). As for the different journals connected with GRECE, *Éléments* has around 5000 subscribers (for a printing of 15,000), *Nouvelle Ecole* has about 2000 subscribers, *Etudes et Recherches* (the new edition, No. 1, Spring, 1983) between 500 and 600, and *Panorama des Idées Actuelles* (No. 1, March, 1985) between 800 and 1000 (along with *Nouvelle Ecole*, which went from a triquarterly to a yearly review, the latter two journals have never appeared regularly). As for *Krisis*, "a journal of ideas and debates" (No. 1, Summer 1988), edited by Benoist, clearly tries to distance itself from the New Right's sphere of influence (it had 600 subscribers in 1992). Most of the texts published in it — often reprints or interviews — are written by decidedly leftist authors (Olivier Mongin, Jean-Michel Palmier, Alain Caillé, Claude Julien, Dominique Wolton, Pierre Fougeyrollas, Bruno Etienne, Max Gallo, Jacques Julliard, etc.). Its declared intention is to transcend "old" splits by championing controversies that tend to make "new" ones beyond the opposition between Left and Right. It is certainly legitimate to ask about the functions of such a journal: does it play a "metapolitical" role in the context of GRECE's strategy or does it allow Benoist, the public figure who is tired of being "ghettoized," to regain cultural respectability? In the latter case, could one not claim that, by dint of mimicking the intellectual Left, its values are inadvertantly adopted? This is the prevailing opinion within Catholic Le Pen circles about Benoist's leftward "drift." Before GRECE revamped its political and cultural credentials during the 1980s, Jean Madiran stigmatized the New Right as an enterprise with a Left ideology because of its anti-Christian atheism: "The radically anti-Christian New Right is spiritually Left. One cannot rule out the

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* Originally published as part of a longer inteview in *Vingtième Siècle*, No. 40 (October-December 1993), pp. 10-21. Translated by Deborah Cook.

1. "Against Totalitarianisms: Toward A New Culture,"(1979); "The Cause of Peoples" (1981, for 1980); "Toward a Right-Wing Gramsciism" (1981); "A Third Way" (1983); "A Certain Idea of France" (1985); "The Challenge of Disneyland" (1986); "Twilight of Blocs, Dawn of Peoples" (1989); "Danger: United States" (1991); "Europe: The New World" (1992).

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possibility that it is a Left enterprise"[2] But this is all too obviously a conspiracy theory.

Vingtième Siècle: Today, can one consider Benoist a Left thinker?

Taguieff: Let us not be so hasty or naive. Benoist's undeniable intellectual evolution, which a part of GRECE followed, did not reflect or result in an unambiguous political evolution. His credibility will only be beyond reproach when he publishes an argumentative text in which he both clearly breaks with the neo-nationalist or "revolutionary-conservative" milieu and clarifies the reasons for this break. For example, the obvious parallels between his Third World positions and those of some communist or Left groups are not in themselves certificates of pride. The wearing of the Islamic *chador* in schools can certainly be defended with diametrically opposed arguments, creating an ambiguous field in which racism and anti-racism turn into each other in this ideological oscillation or redistribution of opinions which is the "right to difference." But it should be noted that, since 1990, Benoist's published statements show that he rejects the National Front's "theses."

Vingtième Siècle: These are?

Taguieff: In a 1990 interview published by *Le Choc du Mois*, Benoist explicitly distanced himself from the "French Right" and clearly stated his rejection of the National Front: "For nearly half a century the French Right was conspicuous by its absence from all the great debates . . . As for my position concerning the National Front, it is quite simple . . . I feel I am a stranger to this movement. I see in it no ideas which are my own and give meaning to my life. I think that the Right always ran the risk of falling into four major positions: liberalism, moral order, integralism and racism. I fear that the National Front, a basically national-populist party, is falling into all four by varying degrees."[3]

In a 1992 interview, Benoist was even more precise: "Personally, the ideas of the National Front dishearten me . . . Especially its ideas about immigration, because I cannot stand its scapegoat logic."[4] This is more than a break; it is a declaration of ideological war. But here especially, Benoist explains the reasons for his hostility toward the National Front and thus distinguishes himself with disdain and distaste from members of GRECE who went over to the Le Pen movement. Certain Machiavellian interpreters will suspect that this is the price he pays for acquiring a certain respectability. The impact of his statements remain to be judged.

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2. See Jean Madiran, "Nouvelle Droite et Délit d'Opinion," in *Itinéraires*, special issue (October-November, 1979), p. 26.
3. See *Le Choc du Mois*, No. 31 (July-August, 1990), p. 32.
4. See *Les Dossiers de l'histoire*, No. 82 (July 1992), pp. 149-50.

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Vingtième Siècle: Did the National Front react to these statements?

Taguieff: The National Front's reaction was not immediate, except for a short note.[5] It was not until February 1993 that Roland Gaucher, editor *of National-Hebdo*, denounced the revival of *Minute* by an editorial team close to or from GRECE (J.-C. Valla etc.), and personally attacked Benoist, whom he suspected of harboring questionable sympathies for communists in France and Russia: "It was strange . . . to see him [Benoist] participate in a colloquium featuring intractable communists. The attitude of the French communists does not appear so strange if one knows that Benoist made contact . . . with Russian 'conservatives' . . . simply former Bolsheviks . . . and Russian nationalists like *Pamiat*, that anti-Semitic organization financed by the KGB under Brezhnev . . . .One of the objectives shared by both nationalists and communists is to recreate a great imperialist Russia. In this context, Benoist looks a little like a 'guru'."[6] Gaucher clearly pointed out the break and the "treachery": "There are many reasons to be disheartened today. However, some reactions, coming from people one knew in other circumstances, are surprising. Thus . . . Benoist, the New Right's intellectual, said he was 'disheartened' by the National Front's ideas in a statement made to a history review which could have come from a vulgar Jean-Pépère Bloch [*sic*]. And the same delicate mind does not hesitate to shake the dirty hands of Russian 'conservatives' [sic]."[7]

Despite his bad faith and his intent to wound, the professional anti-communist Gaucher focused on a paradox which may reveal the permanent ambiguity in Benoist's positions: why not claim to be "disheartened" by the ideas of the Russian nationalists who have no reason to envy the ideas French nationalists defend? This is probably a strategic ploy, as one can see in this analysis of the overcoming of old political splits in Russia: "There, as everywhere, new divisions came into being. On the political level, the major example of this is the rapprochement of the 'whites' and the 'reds': Russophile monarchists and 'national Bolsheviks' now belong to the same camp, which is simply a large group of patriots (those considered as 'being one of us' in Moscow) who want a future for Russia and refuse to be alienated from the West."[8]

Vingtième Siècle: So has Benoist finally found in the Russian nationalists trustworthy allies in his struggle to revive a "revolutionary-conservative" movement and to define a "new kind of resistance" to the "Western order," the "New World Order"?

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5. See *National-Hebdo* (August 6, 1992).
6. Roland Gaucher, "Le GRECE est de Retour," in *National-Hebdo*, No. 446 (Feb. 4-10, 1993), p. 9.
7. Roland Gaucher, "Divers Sujets d'Ecoeurments," in *National-Hebdo*, No. 447 (Feb. 11-17, 1993), p. 2.
8. Alain de Benoist, "Russie: l'Histoire Ouverte," in *Éléments*, No. 74 (Spring, 1992), p. 36.

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Taguieff: In fact, Russian neo-nationalism points to a way of going behind "old political splits" quite close to the one advocated by the New Right "guru." One need only cite Alexandr Prokhanov, who inspired the National Salvation Front, when he defined the Front's anti-globalist ideology on October 24, 1992 at its founding conference in Moscow: "[The NSF embodies] the end of the old and unjust civil war between the reds and the whites. Russia's future rests in the strong alliance between the partisans of social justice — the reds — and of national tradition — the whites. From now on both sides are united in the fight against globalization, cosmopolitanism, American capitalism, as well as the social, national and geopolitical treason of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, who serve the interests of the New World Order to the detriment of the Russian people. The common goal, beyond Left and Right, is the Third Empire."[9]

The positions and ideas are strikingly similar, and this alone might explain the interest most of the leaders of the West European radical Right groups have in "the new Russian resistance" : anti-Westernism (and thus anti-democratism) and anti-globalism (so anti-capitalism and anti-liberalism). On the initiative of the newspaper *Dyenn* (Day), Benoist and Robert Steuckers (head of the New Right in Belgium, editor of the journals *Vouloir and Orientations*) went to Moscow in March 1992 to participate in various public meetings run by Alexandr Dugin (the Russian translator of René Guénon and Julius Evola, who launched a kind of "New Right" network in Moscow). In the journals he has edited since 1990, the former neo-fascist leader Michel Schneider has said this about the trip: "This meeting proves that the cards have been reshuffled and that the divisions between Left and Right, which have dominated the world since 1945, are no longer important. Both in the West and the East, those rejected by the system as marginals will sooner or later find themselves at center-stage."[10] Dugin, who heads AION publications and the ARCTOGAIA association, defends a traditionalism derived from Konstantin Leontier and René Guénon, which sees "globalization" as the absolute enemy.[11] Dugin advocates the creation of an alliance between orthodox and Islamic traditionalisms against "anti-traditional subversion" — an alliance he justifies as follows: "The new phase of the 'Beast's' world strategy consists in the subordination of the Russian people to global power, on the one hand, and in an attack against the most solid bastion of tradition now represented by Islam, on the other."[12] On March 2, 1993, a permanent anti-globalist committee was set up in Moscow.[13]

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9. Cited in *Lutte du Peuple: Mensuel pour une Nouvelle Résistance*," No. 11 (December 1992, p. 8.

10. "Retour de Russie," in *Nationalisme et Rpublique*, No. 8 (June 1, 1992), p. 23.

11. Cf. "Entretien avec A. Douguine, éditeur traditionaliste à Moscou," in *Vouloir*, Nos. 71-72 (January-February 1991), pp. 15-18.

12. See the interview with Claudio Mutti, translated in *Alternative Tercériste*, No. 27 (December 1990), p. 5.

13. See *Nationalisme et République*, No. 13, (March 20 1993), pp. 1-2.

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Vingtième Siècle: Do not these contradictory ideological interventions refute the "thesis" of GRECE's leftist "drift"?

Taguieff: Calling "globalization" or "cosmopolitanism" the common enemy is enough to establish similarities and creates new alliances which clearly show that GRECE's turn toward the Left does not prevent it from seeking some *rapprochements* with radical neo-nationalist currents ("revolutionary nationalists," or neo-fascists) or with anti-Western traditionalist movements. This is the kind of apparent paradox one should reflect on, which is found in all "revolutionary-conservative" positions. What is new is perhaps the twofold fascination exerted by the post-communist East and the anti-Western Third World. From this point on, the light for the "liberators" of Europe comes from the South and the East. In post-communist Russia, the "revolutionary-conservative" double rejection can be carried out politically by uniting "extremes." In 1989, Benoist could still claim that "anti-communism should not result in leading Europeans to an alliance with the US."[14] Now that the communist threat has vanished, only the US can embody the figure of the absolute enemy. The political landscape is simplified, but it also becomes more obscure because it is now impossible to distinguish ideological boundaries and the range of positions. Not all anti-Americanisms are the same! New ambiguities arise . . . around anti-cosmopolitanism. GRECE's anti-cosmopolitanism is not the same as the National Front's.

Vingtième Siècle: Behind all the polemics, what values does the New Right defend in its publications?

Taguieff: Correction: what values does GRECE defend? First of all, its novelty lies in its break with Catholic tradition — the matrix of the conservative Right in France — and its virulent denunciation of the "Judeo-Christian" heritage. In fact, "Judeo-Christianity" tends to be reduced to Christianity, and the latter is rejected because it is the main source of universalist ideals and egalitarian values in the West. For example, "human rights" are denounced as the offspring of the modern period. The second theme — central in the 1970s — is anti-egalitarianism, the insistent denunciation of an "egalitarian utopia." One inspiration for this is the philosopher Louis Rougier, epistemologist, historian of ideas and interpreter of the New Testament.[15] The third theme is none other than the foundational and normative reference to our "Indo-European heritage" redefined and based, with some distortions, on Dumézil's work.[16] Along

14. See "Droit de Réponse," in *Le Choc du Mois*, No. 15 (February 1989), p. 79.

15. See Louis Rougier, *La Mystique Démocratique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1929), and *Du Paradis à l'Utopie* (Paris: Copernic —(GRECE's publishing house), 1979).

16. Cf. "Georges Dumézil et les Etudes Indo-européennes," in *Nouvelle Ecole*, Nos. 21-22 (Winter 1972-73); Alain de Benoist, *Vu de Droite* (Paris: Copernic, 1977), pp. 29-32 and 32-37.

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with this Indo-European reference and in addition to a hierarchical model of social organization (priests/sovereigns, warriors, producers), polytheism or paganism are praised and reformulated as the "real" European religion.[17] A fourth theme, radicalized and privileged in the 1980s but already present in the 1970s, is the critique of economism, of the commodity vision of the world or liberal individualism. This critique becomes so radical that it results in turning "bourgeois (or Western) liberalism" into the "major enemy."[18] There is a permanent "anti-bourgeois" attitude in the "revolutionary-conservative" camp. But, as Benoist explains, "European social democracy" is "one of the most dangerous successors of liberalism." Around the mid-1980s, this intransigent anti-liberalism is redefined as a result of a generalized anti-utilitarianism. This explains the debates and intellectual encounters with the creators of MAUSS (*Mouvement anti-utilitariste dans les sciences sociales*, headed by Alain Caillé, Ahmet Insel and Serge Latouche).[19] A fifth theme appears between 1975 and 1980; it is a radical cultural pluralism based on the right of "peoples" to remain what they are, to preserve their respective identities at all costs in the name of the "right to difference." Inasmuch as cultural difference becomes something absolute, and the reference to a common humanity is eliminated, we can recognize in this differentialism the new ideological form of racism which we have defined as a cultural and differentialist racism. But in his recent work,[20] Benoist reacts to criticism and seems to put forward the kind of classical cultural relativism found in Claude Lévi-Strauss.[21] This is the source of GRECE's peculiar Third World stance, which appears to be a rhetorical way of being radically anti-American.

Vingtième Siècle: Are there racist and eugenic tendencies in the New Right's theses?

Taguieff: These are part of the ideology GRECE inherited from *Europe Action* — a synthesis of Aryan racism and eugenics then called "biological realism." The young Benoist wrote the following: "Biological realism is the best weapon against idealistic chimeras."[22] Or, in 1970: "What allows a population to greatly improve itself qualitatively is the fact that men of value, élites, procreate and transmit their own exceptional traits and gifts according to the laws of heredity."[23] The rhetoric of "biological realism" can be found in GRECE's first texts and especially in the first issues of *Nouvelle Ecole*. There is a fine example of this in the introductory text to a dossier on eugenics: "May

17. Cf. Alain de Benoist, *Comment Peut-on Être Païen?* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1981).
18. Cf. Alain de Benoist, *Oriéntations pour des Anneé Décisives* (Paris: Le Labyrinthe, 1982), p. 35.
19. Cf. *Bulletin du MAUSS*, No. 20 (December, 1986).
20. See *Europe, Tiers-Monde, Même Combat* (Paris: Laffont, 1986).
21. See, for example, *Le Regard Eloignée* (Paris: Plon, 1983).
22. Cf. *Europe Action*, No. 36 (December 1965), p. 9.
23. See *Avec ou sans Dieu?* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1970), p. 88.

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1968: the younger generation revolts, but 'Katangais' and drug addicts also appear . . . This can be explained by the fact that, in times of turmoil, societies are like a bottle shaken up: the impurities suddenly come to the surface . . . But one should allow history to decant the event. And the biological refuse will fall to the bottom. Contemporary social hierarchy does not conform to biological hierarchy . . . The troubled elements are most dense at the extremes: biological froth on the surface, biological dregs on the bottom. Biological froth creates the cultural soup of legal and para-legal parasites . . . Biological dregs are the cultural soup of the most primitive elements."[24]

A truly European nationalist revolution must be a biological one: "Real politics is biopolitics."[25] This biological program is based on differential and genetic (hereditary) determinism in attitudes and behaviors. In eugenics, it is supposed to permit both the elimination of "bad" bloodlines (biological "dregs") and the creation of an elite guaranteed by its "good" heredity. The *Dictionnaire du Militant* claimed that "Alexis Carrel's ideas are one of the major sources for nationalism," and quoted the master: "To perpetuate an elite, eugenics is indispensable."[26] Beginning with its first issue (September-October, 1973), *Éléments pour la Civilisation Européenne* has celebrated Carrel and it feted his centenary. In September 1973, Benoist devoted an article to him.[27] But Carrel would not have been able to recognize himself among such "successors."

Vingtième Siècle: In your work you insist that GRECE increasingly rejected biological references. Could you clarify this?

Taguieff: It should be noted that GRECE attached great importance to "biological realism" up to the mid-1970s. So numbers 8-9 of *Éléments* announces as "soon to be published" a book by Yves Christen and Robert de Herte (one of Benoist's pseudonyms), *Introduction au Réalisme Biologique* (collection *Etudes*), where "Doctor Christen explains the most recent scientific discoveries of man's place in biological evolution. He studies racial differences and explains why eugenics is more necessary than ever today. In the appendix thirty precursors, researchers and popularizers are named: Robert de Herte provides their biographies."[28] In 1977, four "researchers" (probably including Christen and Benoist) published *Race et Intelligence* in Copernic Press (Vol. 1 of the collection "Factuelles," edited by Benoist) under the collective pseudonym of "Jean-Pierre Hébert." But biological determinism is already affected by differentialism: "The authors . . . plead for the right to difference and the flourishing of the particular genius of peoples." The rejection of biological racism becomes

24. See *Nouvelle Ecole*, No. 14 (January-February, 1971), p. 12.
25. Cf. an introductory text which appeared in *Nouvelle Ecole*, No. 9 (June-August, 1969, p. 7.
26. Cf. *Europe-Action*, No. 5, (May 1963, pp. 55 and 64.
27. Cf. *Le Spectacle du Monde* (reprinted in *Vu de Droite*, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-88).
28. (November, 1974-February, 1975), p. 21.

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increasingly clear, especially in Benoist's work.[29] This can be interpreted in two ways: either Benoist evolved on his own intellectually and went from bio-inegalitarian racism to ethnic pluralism or, as an excellent cultural strategist, he was content to reform racist thinking in an acceptable way by a virtuoso reversal of the contemporary cult of difference to the point where he perverted the "right to difference" anti-racists advocate. He would then have created a racism with an anti-racist component. Judging solely by what he has published, it is impossible to decide. And Benoist knows how to play on ambiguities, confusing his commentators.

Vingtième Siècle: Has the New Right taken a position on the denials [of the existence of the gas chambers] by Robert Faurisson and his disciples?

Taguieff: Although GRECE's journals have never published work by negationists, there appears to be an internal and continuing debate on the question of the Nazi genocide of Jews and the murderous gas chambers. In 1990 Georges Charbonneau wrote "The New Right has never been negationist and wants to be so less than ever. In the current polemic concerning the existence of the gas chambers, it should be stated clearly that GRECE will not support those who deny the heinous character of the industrialization of death for European Jews and other ethnic or political minorities during WWII."[30] This is the quasi-public position GRECE adopted at the end of the 1980s. But this position, dictated perhaps by tactical concerns, was publicly challenged by one of GRECE's founders, J.-C. Valla (born in 1944, editor of the *Lettre de Magazine Hebdo* and of the revived *Minute*) in a letter he addressed to the negationist journal edited by Henri Roques: "I do not know if Mr. Charbonneau, who is no longer a member of GRECE, has the right to speak for this association. But GRECE should not claim to speak for all those who consider themselves part of what is called the 'New Right', the boundaries of which are fortunately wider than those of GRECE. Having been general secretary of GRECE, editor-in-chief of *Éléments* and editor of Copernic Press, I refuse to give anyone the right to speak for the New Right. Although this is only my opinion, I personally believe that the revisionists are right."[31]

From 1980, Valla has defended Faurisson by rhetorically associating him with Victor Kravchenko, who witnessed Stalinist crimes and was the object of a witch-hunt in 1949.[32] There is a third, apparently "neutral" (neither one nor the

29. See "Contre tous les Racismes," in *Éléments*, No. 33 (February-March 1980), pp. 13-20; "Racisme: Remarques autour d'une Définition," in *Racismes, Antiracismes* (Paris: Méridiens/Klincksieck, 1986), pp. 203-51.

30. See "Du Révisionnisme," in *Le Lien* (*Bulletin de Liaison des Membres du GRECE*), (Summer 1990), p. 4.

31. See "Droit de Réponse," dated January 24, 1990, in *Revue d'Histoire Révisionniste*, No. 4 (February-April 1991, p. 12.

32. See *Le Figaro-Magazine* (May 23, 1980), p. 71.

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other), position among those who follow GRECE, which consists in placing "exterminationists" and "negationists" back to back. This "neutral" position has a clear goal: negationists should not be supported so as to avoid fanning the flame of controversies that prevent one from leaving the "postwar" period. Charbonneau explains this clearly: "We have to put Auschwitz and the postwar logic behind us. The debate concerning the existence of the gas chambers wearily revives the legitimacy born of Auschwitz at a time when Europe is no longer divided. Auschwitz has to be left behind in the only way possible. It has to be recognized fully in order to allow it to rest. To let it rest in peace in the cemetery of genocides . . . .No genocides chosen and others neglected." So, forgetting Auschwitz dispenses with denying it: this is the argument intended to counter an anti-racism based on the duty to remember and the painful memory of Auschwitz.[33]

Vingtième Siècle: Does the fact that former GRECE leaders belong to the National Front point to a doctrinal community?

Taguieff: The fact that some of GRECE's members have belonged to the National Front since 1984-5 has been interpreted as proof of ideological similarities. Jacques Marlaud, president of GRECE, responded as follows: "Currently the differences between the far Right and the 'New Right' seem insurmountable. First, the National Front is impregnated with a Catholic messianism incompatible with our paganism. Second, the National Front's identitarian doctrine can be summed up as a narrow 'Frenchified' nationalism whereas we are Europeans . . . before being French. Third, the National Front is opposed to mosques, chadors . . . .We stand for the imprescriptible right of peoples to remain as they are; on our soil or elsewhere. Fourth, the security-conscious and superficial identitarian attitudes of the Front's members hide the fact that they lack a social agenda which would break with the consumer society we have denounced as a 'system for killing people.' Fifth, the prevailing military atmosphere in this party is irreconcilable with our libertarian and aristocratic conception . . . of excellence."[34] Clearly the major differences are: the Christian connection, the alternative between populism and elitism, the evaluation of liberal capitalism, the concept of Europe (or the relation to French nationalism). On these four points, GRECE and the Club de l'Horloge also diverge.

Vingtième Siècle: How does the ideological evolution of the Club de l'Horloge compare to GRECE?

Taguieff: Beginning in 1977, the Club de l'Horloge's first book seemed to provide

33. Here GRECE is closer to Paul Yonnet's position in "La Machine Carpentras," in *Le Débat*, No. 61 (September-October 1990), than to Robert Faurisson's.

34. See Jacques Marlaud, "Droit de Réponse," in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (May 17, 1990).

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it a well-defined program: to reconcile economic liberalism and nationalism.[35] If the Club de l'Horloge's first scholarly reference was to Dumézil (his model of tri-functionality), the discovery of Hayek's neo-conservative liberalism led it to read and identify with Edmund Burke. The Club de l'Horloge's national-liberalism was explicitly anti-Jacobin and more generally anti-constructivist. Consequently, the Club's main enemy is the Left since, by definition, the Left has a project for social transformation derived from "constructivist utopias" and leads to the welfare state or various forms of totalitarianism (communism, fascism). When GRECE began to advocate a radical anti-liberalism (between 1977 and 1981), the Club de l'Horloge sought to develop a neo-liberal doctrine combining the concern for "roots" with respect for "national identity." Furthermore, while GRECE dissociated itself from politics during and after the 1980s, the Club de l'Horloge provided the doctrine for all Right oppositional parties before giving the National Front the major principles for an effective argument in 1985, with a book by Jean-Yves Le Gallou.[36] Gallou and Blot joined the National Front, in 1985 and 1988 respectively, along with other deserters from the Club de l'Horlage and CAR (*Comités d'Action Rérpublicaine*, started in January 1982). These deserters include Jean-Claude Bardet and Bruno Mégret, respectively editor-in-chief and director of the National Front's "theoretical" journal, *Identité* ("Journal of National Studies"), which was founded in 1988 and comprises most of the members of the "Conseil scientifique" of the national-populist party. They created a more or less anti-American, national-liberal pole at the heart of the National Front.[37] It was rivalled by other poles: the populist one, with its "revolutionary-nationalist" tradition (inherited from Jean-Pierre Stirbois), and the Catholic traditionalist pole, both of which profess Masonic anti-Judaism.

Vingtième Siècle: What are the major elements in this national-liberal doctrine?

Taguieff: One has to start from the double reality that national-liberal discourse is adapted to the ideological evolution of its adversary and that the Club de l'Horloge's anti-Left argument is explicitly anti-socialist, especially since 1981.[38] Here one also sees the move from anti-egalitarianism toward anti-cosmopolitanism — a move justified, according to Henry de Lesquen (the Club's president), by the transformation of socialist discourse: "The Club's goal is to develop a body of doctrine for the Right . . . .First we made a

35. See *Les Racines du Futur: Demain la France* (Paris: Masson, 1977, republished by Albatros, 1984).

36. See Jean-Yves Le Gallou, ed., *La Préférence Nationale: Réponse à l'Immigration* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1985).

37. See Y. Blot, "L'Imposture Américaine," in *Identité*, No. 14 (September-October 1991, pp. 30-32.

38. See *Echecs et Injustices du Socialisme, Suivi d'un Projet Républicain pour l'Opposition* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1982).

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radical critique of egalitarianism and of the statism which follows from it . . . . (Today) one can speak of a neo-socialism. This is cosmopolitanism . . . its doctrinal core. Neo-socialism wants to dissolve the nation in the human species."[39] Around 1985-6, there is a positive reference in the Club's doctrinal texts to collective identity: be it the cultural identity of the West, Europe, or national identity. "In the West," identity "is coupled with liberty" and the latter implies a certain definition: "To be free is to affirm the identity of an individual or group." The Club's neo-conservatism is both "liberal" (against the welfare state) and identitarian, i.e., "rooted" (in community belonging and traditional values). From this the Club derives its new definition of the anti-totalitarian position: "An uprooted individual is at the mercy of totalitarian events."[40] To defend nationalism is to ward against totalitarianism. However, Club members who belong to the National Front often appear virulently anti-liberal.[41]

Vingtième Siècle: Are GRECE and the Club de l'Horloge opposed on this question of "national-liberalism"?

Taguieff: Yes. To the extent that nationalism implies liberalism only for the Club de l'Horloge. The opposition between GRECE and the Club de l'Horloge is both obvious and insurmountable on this point. For example, it is clear that Benoist's rejection of nationalism is implied both by his cultural Europeanism and by his "regional" pluralism. To have as a goal the creation of an imperial Europe composed of an internal plurality (a "regional Europe," or an "ethnic" Europe) logically leads to anti-nationalism. But it also leads to the denunciation of liberalism as an economic and ideological machine which results in uprooting and uniformity. From this follows a recurring theme: "Le Libéralisme Contre les peuples"[42] — a retort to the Club de l'Horloge's slogan: "Le Libéralisme au Service des Peuples."[43] Based on this Manichean vision, GRECE's denunciation of liberalism is unconditional: "Liberalism destroys collective identities, rooted cultures, and generates uniformity everywhere. Does it claim to be the principle of liberation and emancipation of the subject? People have never been as alienated as in their relation to commodities . . . To fight liberalism here and now is to grasp evil by its roots."[44] Defined as the "major enemy" by Benoist,[45] liberalism, becomes the sole enemy, suitably demonized as in Third World literature from which the most violent denunciations of the "imperialist" West and the "Americanization of France and Europe" are

39. See *Lettre d'Information du Club de l'Horloge*, No. 39, 3rd trimester (1989), p. 1.
40. See H. de Lesquen, in *Lettre d'Information*, No. 41, 1st trimester (1990, p. 1.
41. Cf. J.-C. Bardet, "Le Libéralisme est un Ennemi," in *Choc du Mois*, No. 24 (November 1989), pp. 18-20.
42. See *Éléments*, No. 68 (Summer, 1990).
43. 5th annual Club university, Nice (October 20-22, 1989).
44. See Robert de Herte, a.k.a. Benoist, "L'Escroquerie Libéral," *Ibid.*, p. 3.
45. In *Éléments*, No. 41 (March-April, 1982), pp. 37-48.

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borrowed.[46] GRECE's anti-West stance is first and foremost a radical anti-Americanism: "Now that the US has become the only world superpower, it is high time to say that it represents the height of dehumanization, vulgarity and stupidity, the negation of any inner freedom, the lowering of man to the level of an object."[47] This is in sharp contrast with the work of the Club de l'Horloge, which tries to "exculpate" the West by denouncing the "ideovirus" which results in a bad conscience ("misdeeds of colonialism," "racism," capitalist exploitation," etc.).[48] One should add that the Club de l'Horloge defends Catholicism as the traditional religious form of France, "the Church's elder daughter." Christianity, well tempered by the Church — a structure of order — is part of France's identity: this is the "traditionalist" argument that the Club opposes to the "constructivism" of GRECE, whose attempts to revive an originally indo-European paganism are denounced as unrealistic, even utopian. The Catholic religion is part of the "heritage from the past,"[49] and this allows the Club to reject both Islam and socialism as incompatible with Franco-Christian identity.[50] In this sense, the Club de l'Horloge retraces the path of *Action Française*: whether one is Christian or agnostic, Catholicism must be defended because France is a Catholic country.

In 1990 Benoist published a long article on Hayekian liberalism.[51] This article resembles ones written by someone on the Left. De Lesquen responded that his club tried to "define a national liberalism distinct from utopian liberalism."[52] "Rhetorical hybrid," was Benoist's response.[53] The differences between them could not be more clearly marked.

Vingtième Siècle: Can one consider GRECE and the Club de l'Horloge as two spheres of influence within the intellectual New Right?

Taguieff: That would amount to taking journalistic labels literally. The Club de l'Horloge is clearly a right-wing political club working for the Right. As for GRECE, its position on the Left/Right axis has become indeterminate. And the work of its major intellectual does not provide the necessary clarification.

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46. See "Pour en Finir avec la Civilisation Occidentale," in *Éléments*, No. 34 (April-May, 1980). See also the 20th national colloquium of *Éléments*, (Versailles, November 16, 1986): "The Challenge of Disneyland."
47. See Alain de Benoist, "L'Impérialisme Américain," in *L'Idiot International*, No. 44 (January 16, 1991), p. 3.
48. Cf. Michel Leroy and the Club de l'Horloge, *L'Occident sans Complexes* (Paris: Carrère, 1987).
49. Cf. *L'Identité de la France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1985).
50. Cf. *Lettre d'Information*, No. 23, 4th trimester (1985): "Socialisme et Religion sont-ils incompatibles?"
51. Alain de Benoist, "Hayek: La Loi du Jungle," in *Éléments*, No. 68 (Summer, 1990), pp. 5-14.
52. H. de Lesquen, "Droit de Réponse," in *Éléments*, No. 71 (Fall 1991), p. 28.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

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In his "responses" to "questions" asked by Alain Caillé, director of the *Revue du MAUSS*, Benoist reiterates that he cannot be defined in terms of the Left/Right split and rejects both. This allows him to "justify" his voyages in ideological and political space and, finally, to transform his ambiguities into marks of ineffable particularity. He is beyond "Left or Right," "liberalism or socialism," etc.: "On the current political landscape, I see that the Right's old devils (moral order, liberalism, nationalism, racism) are added to the old problems with the Left (economism, moralism, globalism, abstraction). In particular, I see the same theoretical poverty more or less everywhere, the same conformity with respect to trends, the same reverence towards money . . . . I note that the Right generally accuses me of having Left ideas and on the Left I am accused of having Right ideas. This is not really said to upset me."[54] Neither Left nor Right: Benoist's definition of himself has become routine and opaque. Is it a rejection of so-called "political" politics, of spectacular politics? Or is it the ideological safety belt for a radical Right waiting for its chance? If one looked for a clear answer about Benoist's philosophical references and the ideological and political preferences in his work, one would more than likely be disappointed, even baffled. After challenging the "Left/Right dichotomy" in the *Revue du MAUSS*, Benoist responded in this aesthete and deliberately provocative way to his interviewer (Caillé): "If I have to have one, my filiations would be: Rousseau, the commune, French socialism (especially Sorel and Pierre Leroux), the non-conformists of the 1930s, the German conservative revolution, Italian revolutionary syndicalism and situationism. Draw whatever conclusions you want."[55] Anything can follow from this.

Vingtième Siècle: Can one still speak of the New Right today?

Taguieff: Today "New Right" is an empty label, a name without a clear reference. It is therefore deceptive. But the name has characterological value in that it designates the move to recreate ideologically the "European nationalism" which GRECE started and has kept going since its inception at the end of the 1960s. Until 1980, GRECE spread the fundamentals of its doctrine among various right-wing groups in France. Between 1981 and 1989-90, it lost its "metapolitical" role; and the Right did not owe its triumphant return to power to GRECE's diffuse influence. But, along with its "spiritual guide" Benoist, GRECE simultaneously found an unexpected and unforeseen place on the French intellectual scene in 1983-4. The changes in GRECE's positions between 1968 and 1993 are striking: from the defence of "Western civilization" to the denunciation of "Westernism," from the praise of inequality to the cult of difference and the imperative to "defend the basic values of our

54. See *Revue du MAUSS*, No. 13, 3rd trimester (1991), p. 129.
55. *Ibid.*

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civilization" to the "new alliance" between Europe and the Third World.[56]

Radical anti-Americanism is the political result of cultural differentialism. In 1991, Jean-Edern Hallier denounced America as "the public enemy of the world."[57] At the end of a long article published in the same journal, Benoist took a similarly anti-imperialist position and claimed: "The future is staked on the preservation of diversity in the world. In other words: the cause of peoples, of all peoples against the American *homo oeconomicus*." In the Manichean vision of the "pro-Third World right-wing," America embodies the image of the "Great Satan." It is as difficult to avoid demonizing as it is to remain on the Right when one thinks on both the Left and the Right and accepts the ambiguity (*Krisis* claims to be both "Left and Right"). Closer to *L'Idiot international* or to *Le Monde Diplomatique* than to *Figaro-Magazine* or *Valeurs Actuelles* because of his anti-Americanism and anti-liberalism, Benoist might appear to be one of the last French leftists if his past and his ambiguities did not rule out such a naive reading! This is why he upsets people who like clear distinctions. The trajectory of this strange turncoat should be studied without blinders. And with an eye to comparison: of the two young nationalist militants in the 1960s, "François d'Orcival" and "Fabrice Laroche," one became a defender of a "liberal" West under American tutelage, while the other ended up in the camp of the enemies of the "messianism of the 'Bible and business'." This is a politically heterogeneous camp, inhabited by all those who defend identities and forms of "rootedness" on many mutually exclusive levels (national, ethnic, regional, etc.). At the end of a conference on November 24, 1985, Benoist defined his movement's highest value as follows: "Some call for SOS Racism. We answer: SOS Roots."[58] Roots, identities: these are the new absolutes.

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56. See "Le Droit la Différence: Pour en Finir Avec tous les Totalitarismes," in *Éléments*, No. 33 (February-March 1980); *Éléments*, No. 1, 1973, p. 7; and *Éléments*, Nos. 48-49 (Winter 1983-84).

57. See his "editorial" in *L'Idiot international* (January 16, 1991).

58. See *Une Certaine Idée de la France* (Paris: Editions GRECE/Le Labyrinthe, 1985).

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*Three Interviews with Alain de Benoist**

I

Le Monde: You emphasized the simplicity of the National Front's ideas when it achieved its first electoral successes but you believed it was only a "flash in the pan." Since that time, some of your own friends have supported the Lepénist movement which has become more firmly rooted in French society. Have you lost your intellectual power of seduction?

Benoist: I have never tried to please. To see one's friends make choices different from one's own is a fairly trivial matter. I have not changed: the National Front's ideas seem to be generally disconcerting, even untenable. I am trying to say this as honestly as possible. I am amazed that little has been found to oppose Le Pen apart from sophistries, *ad hominem* arguments, or dubious historical comparisons. This seems to reflect a disquieting intellectual vacuum. The reasons why this phenomenon survives are now well known. The first problem is immigration, which was not discussed before Le Pen and has become something which cannot be discussed with him. Then there are all those fears, all those fantasies, which are part of the transition period in which we are living and which the Front National is constantly exploiting. Finally, there is the fact that the political class is; this creates a kind of negative sympathy for the Front.

Le Monde: What do you think is untenable in the National Front's ideas?

Benoist: First, they are based on a kind of scapegoat logic which consists in making one group of the population responsible for a situation whose causes are external. Immigrants cannot be blamed if the French can no longer provide the world with an example of a way of thinking, behaving and existing. Immigrants cannot be blamed if the social fabric is unraveling, if man has become alienated from his own nature, if different ways of life are disappearing in a world where money is the only sign of distinction. Immigrants cannot be blamed if we live with an ideology based on commodities and if advertising copy has become the paradigm of social discourse. It should also be added that

* This text consists of three separate interviews. The first was conducted by *Le Monde* in May 1992, but never published in France (English translation by Deborah Cook). The second was conducted by Armin Mohler and Dieter Stein, and was originally published in *Junge Freiheit* (English translation by Magda Mueller). Both have appeared in Italian in *Diorama Letterario* 169 (June-July 1993), pp. 3-12. The third interview consists of a series of questions submitted by the *Telos* staff and answered by Benoist directly in English.

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it is certainly not immigrants who colonize our collective imagination today.

France is not threatened with a loss of its identity because there are immigrants. It is, rather, because France has lost its identity that is no longer capable of confronting and resolving the problem of immigration. By focusing on immigrants, one's attention is diverted. The real problems are concealed. Given the arguments put forward, the debate becomes archaic and is stymied. There is a terrible mirror-effect at work here. On the one hand, immigration is turned into something diabolic and, on the other, Le Pen is turned into the devil. A permanent psychodrama results where a simulacrum of fascism confronts a simulacrum of anti-fascism. One is not only approaching the third millennium with one's eyes fixed on the rear-view mirror, but one cannot even criticize immigration without being called a "Lepénist," nor can one claim solidarity with immigrants without being accused of "cosmopolitanism." In the end, news items are exchanged: "racist crimes" against "Arab delinquency." Fear of immigrants against fear of the "old shibboleths."

Apart from the question of immigration, the core of the National Front's doctrine seems to lie in Le Pen's saying: "I prefer my daughter to my cousin, my cousin to my neighbor, etc." This goes further than one might suspect. This sort of socio-biological hierarchy of affections is doubly absurd. There is no reason why the scale of preferences should be one of genetic proximity: why should I not prefer my neighbor to my cousin if my neighbor is nicer! But given that social and political life is full of conflicts, the real question is this: what happens if there is a conflict between my cousin and my daughter or my cousin and my neighbor? There are really only two solutions. Either I systematically take the side of the one who is closest to me (in which case, there is no ethics of truth: all promises, all contracts are immediately disqualified) or I try to judge the truth of the situation, and it is quite possible I may side with my cousin against my daughter, or with my neighbor against my cousin. Acting in this fashion, however, requires a principle which goes beyond simple belonging. It is easy to see that such a principle does not exist in the National Front's logic. Moreover, this is the whole ambiguity of nationalism. In an almost prophetic way, Thierry Maulnier said in 1958: "The cult of the nation is not a response to the real problems of the world but an escape, a mystifying effusion or, worse still, a fearful diversion to internal problems." For his part, Maulnier claimed there was no sense in combating individualism if all it meant was transferring it to the level of the nation. In either case, the metaphysics of subjectivity remains and it is often only the windbreaker for social egoism.

Le Monde: What do you think about the National Front's discriminatory use of the right to difference which you yourself helped popularize?

Benoist: The right to difference is a principle and has value only as a generalization. In other words, I can only defend my difference legitimately as long as

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I recognize and respect the difference of others. As soon as this right is instrumentalized and your difference is opposed to that of others, instead of admitting that the difference of others is no threat to your own but in fact reinforces it, as soon as you consider difference not as something which makes dialogue possible but as something which validates its rejection, when, consequently, you posit difference as an absolute, whereas it exists by definition only in a relation, you fall back into tribal nationalism, into belonging as pure subjectivity. The direct effects of this can be seen in the contradictions of a Le Pen who claims to defend the traditions of "indigenous" people in France but justifies colonialism in New Caledonia and describes Khanate apparel as "retrograde," or who still speaks of God but maintains that one cannot simultaneously be a good Frenchman and a good Muslim!

Le Monde: The National Front also champions another concept with which you are familiar: the defense of identity.

Benoist: I have the impression it only defends a negative identity based on the rejection of immigrants. It is very interested in the question of knowing who is French but never considers another question much more fundamental: what is French? This question cannot be answered by sounding out empty shells: Charles Martel, Joan of Arc, etc. On the subject of identity, the best distinction is the one Paul Ricoeur makes between *idem* and *ipse* identity. The permanence of the collective entity throughout constant changes (*ipse* identity) cannot be reduced to something with the status of an event or of repetition (*idem* identity). On the contrary, the former is linked to a complete hermeneutics of the self, to the whole work narration. This is the very condition of self-appropriation inasmuch as narration gives rise to a "place," a space-time which configures a meaning. "It is the identity of the recounted history which makes the identity of the individual," Ricoeur claims. To defend one's identity is not to be satisfied with a little ritual vulgate. It is to understand identity as something preserved in the play of differentiations and to attempt to recreate conditions in which it is possible to produce such a story.

Le Monde: In your opinion, what is the best way to speak of immigration and its ramifications?

Benoist: Immigration is historically linked to capitalist expansion and to forced uprooting which is the result of structural difficulties in the Third World. It is thus a negative phenomenon and it would be wrong to think of it as inevitable: the Muslim's problems will not be solved by making a million more Muslims come to France. A healthy approach to the problem would be to have concrete solidarity with immigrants, who are its first victims (since they are the ones most at risk of losing their identity by emigrating), then to develop a profound critique of the logic of capitalism, and finally to intensify cooperation with

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countries in the Third World by helping them become self-sufficient, by dispelling the illusions of "development" fostered by the World Bank and the IMF.

Furthermore, immigration should precipitate a rethinking of the limits of the French model of the nation-state, built (both before and after the revolution) on the ruins of regional identities in perfect harmony with proselytizing Christianity and deculturalizing occidentalism. The nation-state was only able to integrate individuals within formal legality. It could never offer anything to communities that wanted to join, as such, with a greater whole. In other words, it is a question of rediscovering the plural identity of the French peoples. This would require a distinction between citizenship and nationality, and not to confuse integration and assimilation as nearly everyone does today from Le Pen to Poperen. For my part, I am thinking of a form of open community which is the opposite of apartheid and which means that the necessary integration does not entail forgetting one's own origins. Maintaining one's roots is a way of resisting dehumanization and over-exploitation. Consider two very different examples. The first is that of Asian immigration and especially that from Vietnam. This is simultaneously an example of a communitarian model and of successful integration, thanks primarily to the maintenance of strong family structures which transmit the heritage but which also result in better performance in school, less delinquency and better professional qualifications. The other is that of the Jewish community, which was able to integrate perfectly but at the same time knew how to resist assimilation by refusing to give in at the time of the Revolution to the bribe contained in Clermont-Tonnerre's famous phrase: "Everything for the Jews as individuals, nothing for the Jews as a people." Criticism of the communitarian model, which is all too quickly characterized as a "ghetto," is not very different from the charge, traditionally brought against Jews, of "double allegiance." The dichotomy between assimilation and exclusion is just as unacceptable as the one which requires choosing between the ideology of the bunker and the world of "cosmopolitans," the close-minded aborigine and the universal tourist.

Le Monde: But if France has lost her identity, who is to blame?

Benoist: It is the fault of the vast movement of techno-economic homogenization, which is eroding collective identities nearly everywhere and is producing a new form of spiritual distress which Roger Garaudy rightly called "non-sense." This generation of non-sense, i. e., the feeling of the absurdity of life at the very moment when the social question has returned as the order of the day, bears witness to the failed promises of the Enlightenment. The idea of man as "master and sovereign of nature" has led to the technical inspection of the planet and to the devastation of the framework of life. Belief in progress has not stemmed the eruption of modern totalitarian systems and ecological disasters. The promotion of the individual has turned into the dissolution of the social bond, the disappearance of organic conviviality, solitude, the

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masses' anonymity. The most "normal" model of man today is that of a predatory individual, always looking after his best interest, all the more a stranger to those of his kind who are seen as so many potential rivals in a competition without a goal. A flight forward towards "more and more," social relations are reduced to a play of interests within a society identical with a pure market. "No one tolerates others any more," Roland Castro said recently. And similarly, from one end of the planet to the other man is confronted increasingly with what is always the same. However, despite what is sometimes claimed, it is not fear of the other which provokes racism; it is fear of the same; it is fear of an indifferentiation always linked to a social disintegration which gives rise to endless mimetic rivalries. Similarly, democracy is faced with an unprecedented crisis which empties it of its content: the desertion of the public sphere, the dictatorship of the private, the crisis of representation, the heteronomy of opinion, generalized apathy, mass conformism, etc. Human life is placed under the impersonal regime of the law. Concrete, identifiable constraints have been replaced only by the abstract dictatorship of an anonymous "they," against which it is no longer even possible to revolt. Never have such a great number of decisions been taken by those who have been coopted rather than elected. Under such conditions, how could a general will emerge to express the identity of the rulers and the ruled?

Le Monde: In this regard, could you not be accused of being overly simplistic when you speak of the "nullity" of the political class?

Benoist: I am not at all singing the old refrain that everything is rotten! Moreover, this is a dangerous tune because, by saying that everything is rotten, one winds up including oneself. On the contrary, in France we have a political class of a better quality than in a number of neighboring countries. It is not human flaws which explain the nullity of this class but the fact that these people are caught in structural constraints, in a general movement which practically forces them to be vacuous. The denial of the primacy of the political, the role the media play, the way in which money, as a universal equivalent, leads to the weakening and neutralization of convictions, forces this class to resort to an administrative language transformed all too often into wooden speech. It is less and less a political class and more and more a group of technicians whose properly political culture is often non-existent. At the same time, it has less and less grasp of what is concrete. Relying on an unopposed media, impotent in the face of social change taking place over their heads, the technicians are also progressively deprived of their traditional prerogatives. Is it not fascinating to see that the more they try to listen to their fellow citizens, the more they are rejected by public opinion? The truth is that they are caught up in an immense recentering movement which appears pell-mell as the collapse of communism, the disappearance of Gaullist value, the *de facto* rallying of socialists around a "social liberalism," and that this recentering movement, from which they cannot and do not

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want to escape, is the very ground on which Le Pen plants his simplistic propositions. Only the Greens seem to escape this tendency. For the time being: despite a certain naivete, they at least have the merit of subverting the capitalist imagination. On a more general level, we are seeing interests and values confront each other. The difference is that values are non-negotiable.

Le Monde: Do you have the solution to these problems?

Benoist: Only utopians have ready-made solutions. What is clear is that the appeal to xenophobia is not the best solution to the destruction of the will to live together! It is rather a question of reinstituting the sense of the gift, of gratuity, of solidarity, in a society which increasingly tends to reify social relations, i. e., a society where man produces himself as an object after having transformed everything that surrounds him into an artifact. But one does not recreate sociality in an authoritarian fashion — starting at the top. To heal the democratic deficit, one can only start at the bottom. To recreate democracy from the ground up, a democracy based on the participation of everyone, is easier said than done. However, this is the only solution I see: to recreate ways of life which produce conviviality committed to the common good both within the workplace and in living space. This is not yet another appeal to civil society, which would only accentuate the dictatorship of the private, but an appeal to multiply public spaces within which an active citizenry can be reborn.

Le Monde: Do intellectuals no longer play a role?

Benoist: I am fascinated by the current disintegration of critical thought. Yesterday intellectuals were the bad conscience of the existing order. Many have become the good conscience of the established disorder. Prepared to do anything to get some crumbs from the media's cake, they do not realize that they are cutting the branch on which they sit. One should also take into account the divorce between intellectual families and political families. The ideas of "Right" and "Left" are no longer pertinent when it is a question of describing the content of major works appearing today. As far as the realm of ideas and the work of thought go, the Left-Right paradigm seems increasingly to have been replaced by a break between the "center" and the "periphery." The former corresponds to a dominant ideology which is to legitimate the market system and the latter includes all those who, no matter what their own itinerary, challenge the axiomatic content of interest and blend of economism, productivism and utilitarianism to which liberal society has led. Fruitful dialogues are possible in this "periphery."

Le Monde: Do you see a connection between the resurgence in France of the "tribal" attitudes you mention and the violent awakening of nationalisms in Eastern Europe?

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Benoist: These are two different phenomena. In the East people were able to resist communist domination by hanging onto their national, cultural or religious identity. The disintegration of the Soviet system, which has led from one excess to the other, now favors a huge centrifugal movement evidenced in dangerous and distressing irredentist disputes. One should not forget, however, that these irredentisms are often the consequence of establishing artificial borders imposed by international treaties. The problems of the peoples of the East who are clashing today will certainly not be resolved by proposing that they become "world citizens." The solution can only be found within the framework of a new collective security system for all of continental Europe. But if this is to take place, Europeans will have to want once again to be the subjects of their own history. Today, however, there is only talk of a Europe with two gears in which the old communist Iron Curtain would somehow be replaced by a capitalist Iron Curtain. relegating the poor countries of the European East to the trash-bin of history . . .

Le Monde: Since you have been arguing for some time for the construction of an "imperial" Europe, what exactly does the Maastricht Treaty mean to you?

Benoist: There are only two models for the construction of Europe: the empire and the nation. The latter, which became a political concept with the Revolution, is directly linked to individualism as a value (Louis Dumont). Too big to solve little problems, too small to solve big ones, it is especially incapable of controlling the trans-state expansion of an economic sphere which has become globalized. The empire, understood in the most traditional sense, seems to be the only model which can reconcile the one and the many: it is the polity which organizes the organic unity of its different components while respecting their autonomy. As a European citizen of French nationality, I am one of those "federalists" Le Pen denounces who believes it is possible to create a federal political unity in Europe on the basis of peoples and regions. What bothers me is that I do not see the Maastricht Treaty leading to an autonomous, politically sovereign Europe determined to acquire the equivalent of what the Monroe Doctrine was for the US, but rather a phantom of Europe, a Europe of the unemployed, the absent and the impotent, a free trade zone governed on the theoretical level by ultra-liberal monetary principles and, on the practical level, by administrators and bankers who neither have a political project nor democratic legitimacy. The ambiguity in this treaty is that it ends up displeasing both those who support only France — I am not one of them — and those who favor an integrated Europe, myself included. There is talk for example, of "transfers of sovereignty." I am not opposed to this. But what new sovereign entity do they benefit? They benefit no one, so that the so-called transfers really only represent the abandonment of sovereignty. The cart has really been put before the horse. By creating a great European market, it was thought that an economic citizenry would appear which would progressively

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be transformed into a political citizenry. Today they have changed their tune. Instead of expanding the field for the construction of Europe. they are busy adopting criteria which are going to cut Europe in two. One has reached a brick wall. Nietzsche said: "Europe will create itself on the edge of a tomb." For my part, I believe that it will create itself over and against the US, or it will not create itself.

Le Monde: Some fear that Europe will be dominated by Germany . . . What about you?

Benoist: Let us not look there for a scapegoat to excuse our own faults. If the French are too weak compared to the Germans, they only have to work at becoming stronger. Germany is what it is: a great country. It will never become the principality of Monaco. In the coming years, given its normal geopolitical role, it will naturally create a sphere of cultural, economic and political influence in the heart of Europe. Instead of worrying about this, it would be advisable to try to counterbalance it by assuming a proper vocation, i.e., by organizing southern Europe in close association with the people on both sides of the Mediterranean. Unfortunately France, which has important trump cards that would enable it to do this, has seriously damaged its credibility with its incoherent Arab policies. This has led to its involvement with the US in the international police action which was the Gulf War. That was disastrous. While it is not France's business to deal with Germany, if France is incapable of organizing the Mediterranean region, she is in danger of becoming a simple bridgehead for a new American order.

II

Mohler and Stein: While in East Berlin in February 1993 you were beaten up by young "Autonomen" because they considered you a "racist'. In the Spring of 1968, at the age of 25, you founded the New Right in Paris. This was the consequence of the split of a circle of young intellectuals who dealt with ideologies of race. In those days you broke with your friends from the circle because you were not concerned with "race" but with "difference." The distinction between thinking in terms of race and thinking in terms of difference in France was transformed into a paradigm of political thinking due to your influence. Could you define the concept of "difference" in politics?

Benoist: The recognition of difference — for the individual as well as for a people — is the recognition of what constitutes personality, identity and is what makes the individual-people distinct. To deny the difference means to regard human beings as interchangeable at will. Racism is nothing but the denial of difference. This refusal occurs in two different forms. The more well-known one is xenophobia: the hate, the brutal repelling of the other. We know this from Rostock and elsewhere. The second form of refusal presents itself as humanitarian:

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assimilation elevated to a principle. It recognizes the other as long as he gets rid of his otherness, his heterogeneity; he is considered a "human being like me" and is accepted as long as he is not different. During the French Revolution the Duke of Clermont-Tonnerre, who wanted to emancipate the Jews, said: "Everything for the Jews as individuals, nothing for the Jews as a people!" Fortunately, the Jews did not listen to him. They did not confuse integration and assimilation; they kept their distance.

During its entire history, the West has alternated between both forms of refusal. Most frequently it has been legitimated by universalism — as much by religious as by secular universalism. Even when it does not always lead to enslaving or to extermination of the other, universalism insists on denying the other a life according to his difference. Behavior towards the other turns into proselytism: the day before yesterday it turned into "true belief," yesterday into "progress," today into "development." This universalism is a disguised ethnocentrism: the West exports its values by declaring them "universal." This venture is doomed to fail, since such universal values solidify and become encrusted when they become the categorical imperative.

Therefore, a consequent anti-racism presupposes recognition of difference. Why has it always been difficult for the West to accept heterogeneity? Difference results in inequality, which has a complementary character. To posit a difference absolutely would be contradictory, for one can only differ with regard to something different. There is not just one truth. The concept of superiority of one nation, one people, one race or one civilization is absurd. It would be especially grotesque to maintain a superiority of Western civilization — its historical path was lamentable and its present intellectual condition is poor. More than ever there is a need for dialogue among cultures. Such a dialogue, however, is only possible if heterogeneity is respected. Difference does not prevent a dialogue but makes it possible. We need pluralism.

Mohler and Stein: In Germany, France's "New Right" is still considered "racist."

Benoist: That is because the Germans dare not think about "difference." Under the pressure of the homogenizing propaganda, they dare no longer distinguish between the heterogeneity of manners and values. At any rate, the New Right has repeatedly distanced itself from "biologistic" interpretations of social behavior (Social Darwinism, socio-biology). I have written a whole book against racism.

Mohler and Stein: You know today's German Right well. Are there things within this Right which are strange and incomprehensible for you?

Benoist: It is not in my nature to play the schoolmaster. But since you ask, I am a little surprised how the German Right is almost entirely concerned — across its spectrum — with German problems and Ger.nan authors. In France the

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New Right is at least equally interested, if not more, in German, Italian, Spanish etc. authors as in French ones. A slogan like "Germany first, then Europe" does not fit into my view of things. Personally, I understand myself above all as a European, then as a "Norman" (a native of Normandy), and then as a Frenchman. But perhaps this has to do with the fact that France was always too much of a nation while Germany too little.

Furthermore, I notice something that does not concern merely the German Right, but Germans in general: their understanding of politics. For Germans, it seems as if, in politics, the (absolute) good or the (absolute) bad is always at stake. They seem to need "moral certitudes." They think they represent "the good." But politics is not concerned with that. On the contrary, politics has to do with discussion of different viewpoints and in some respects it is also a game. Of course, politics seems to have something to do with morality. Yet in essence, politics has nothing to do with it (or with "immorality"). It would be dangerous to pursue politics on the basis of morality. If one's own position is understood as "good," then that of the opponent becomes "evil." Thus the opponent becomes the enemy against whom everything is allowed and his characteristics become incriminating. Such a "moral" concept of politics inevitably leads to the use of the worst methods possible. Carl Schmitt has seen this clearer than anyone else. The German predilection for proceduralism may explain the slow pace with which political ideas now are circulated.

Mohler and Stein: After 1945 there was (and still is) a strong current in the German Right that considered being on the "Right" is primarily an "attitude." This current also believes that the French New Right is "too intellectual."

Benoist: Clearly, the New Right has always been perceived as "too intellectual" by those who, undoubtedly, are not intellectuals. If they are happy with an attitude, it is their business. A world consisting only of intellectuals would certainly be unbearable — indeed, a world totally without intellectuals would be unbearable. At any rate, the reproach would not be appropriate if it were accompanied by the claim that the New Right has selected the wrong intellectual strategy. The New Right never selected anything of the kind for the simple reason that it was not what it was about. One cannot blame a computer scientist for not selling flowers.

Mohler and Stein: The New Right is a think tank, not a political party. What is a think tank allowed to do? What should it refrain from?

Benoist: First of all, what can a political party do? Obviously, not a lot. None of the major changes during the last century have been brought about by party activities or by government policies. There were always people who claimed that theories are useless, only practical forces are acceptable. However, these people forget that theories set powers in motion (often unnoticed).

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What, then, can a think tank do? It can contribute to the development of ideas and wait for their impact. What must a think tank be aware of? It should not confuse its task. Experience shows that "party intellectuals" start with the strategy of their ideas but soon end up with the ideas of their strategies.

Mohler and Stein: The historical significance of the New Right consists in having established a right-wing intellectual hegemony after a long tradition of left-wing liberal hegemony in France. Has the task of the New Right thereby come to an end?

Benoist: I have the feeling that its time has come. The collapse of communism has left a more than ever amorphous world in which liberalism believes it can advocate the notion of the "end of history" as a leading idea. Communism was already meaningless. Liberalism generalizes that to non-sense. But at least it now shows itself openly for what it always was: the implosion of the social, productivist delirium, US cultural colonization, unequal exchange with the Third World, destruction of cultural identities, technology as the means of modern neutralization, escape into unlimited competition, the crisis of political representation, the market as the paradigm for all social processes, slogans in advertisement as the paradigm for verbal communication, and the unleashing of utilitarianism and individualism. In short, a world in which nothing has value anymore but everything has a price. Believing that these conditions of a hegemony of language from the Right (or the Left) are favorable is mere illusion. While modernity comes to an end, and with it all mega-narratives through which it was legitimated, it is replaced by a hegemony of non-thinking — the hegemony of the Neutreum, of alienated individuals increasingly indifferent toward one another, deprived of inner freedom, on a permanent search for the "highest profit", mere victims of the media and of fads produced by the media . . . The Catholic philosopher Augusto Del Noce has pointed out correctly that it was not the European East but the West that has best realized the dream of Marxist rationalism.

Confronted with the destruction of the mind, the disintegration of society the destruction of real democracy, today the New Right has above all the duty to struggle for a revitalization of a collective life committed to generosity, decision and solidarity.

Mohler and Stein: Do you think along with a lot of other Frenchmen, that Germany is drifting towards the East?

Benoist: No. Considering its central position in Europe, Germany has the natural task to strengthen the dialectic in relations between East and West. The best way to miss her mission and to become unfaithful to herself would be for Germany to stare exclusively towards the West. Part of Germany's task is also to decipher the Russian enigma. In the long run, the basis for a collective security system in

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Europe will be the German-Russian rapprochement. This is also the reason why Americans will do everything in their power to hinder such a rapprochement after they could not prevent German unification.

Mohler and Stein: In an article on the Gulf War you wrote that a Third World War would be fought between the US and Europe. Is that wishful thinking, or do you see concrete signs?

Benoist: This is neither my prediction nor my wishful thinking. In my opinion this hypothesis has a good chance of becoming reality. In the US the only form of legitimation is the standard of living. Today this form of reassurance is endangered in two ways: at home by the disintegration of the social system and by the partial decline of the US on the world market; abroad by the increasing economic power of Europe and Japan. The question is now whether Americans are capable of giving up a hegemony that so far has made it possible for them to live at the expense of others by manipulating the dollar. In reality, there is already a sort of state of war in trade between Europe and the US, while the financial world system is marked by a growing separation between the flow of money and real production. Such a situation cannot last forever. In my opinion, tensions between the US and Europe will heighten. The spirit of "collaboration" with the US that is apparent within European politicians can, at most, delay the inevitable. But this spirit of collaboration cannot make these tensions disappear. Berlin is gradually becoming the capital of Europe.

Mohler and Stein: Where does the almost romantic image of Germany within the French New Right come from? How can one explain your Germanophile attitude, the fascination with Indo-Germanic roots? In this context, how do you see the overall German situation in 1993?

Benoist: For years, this characterization of the New Right has been popularized by the media. The "anti-fascist" intelligentsia knows well how to intimidate a German citizen in 1993! To the point! I am not a "Germanophile"! There are a number of European countries like Italy, Flanders, or Ireland which I value as much as Germany. Realistically, however, I have to notice that Germany holds a central position for the New Right, first of all, for geopolitical reasons, and then in thought and in the arts: What would philosophy and music be without Germany?

Mohler and Stein: What role did the trauma of "collaboration" play for the development of the French Right after the War?

Benoist: The French are seldom "traumatized" by their past. This is a German idiosyncrasy. Born in 1945, I leave these matters to those who still have nostalgia for fascism or anti-fascism. Neither side has realized that the postwar is over.

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Mohler and Stein: How do you reconcile your curiosity for Indo-Germanic roots, European paganism, etc., with the search for a new culture which the New Right would like to represent?

Benoist: Subjects like paganism and Indo-European roots are only a small part of the works of the New Right. Besides, I do not understand why the one cannot be reconciled with the other. Indo-European culture (a linguistic term) stands at the beginning of most historical civilizations in Europe. The remembrance of the origins is not at all antithetical to dealing with the present and with the will to form the future. Christians founded their belief in events which took place 2000 years ago. By no means does that prevent them from being just as "modern" as everyone else. The idea of a clash between past and future disappears as soon as one emancipates oneself from the ideology of progress. Actually, past and future are always dimensions of the present. When one wants to "create Europe" it may not be a bad idea to be aware of common foundations.

Mohler and Stein: It has been claimed that the New Right has had a great impact on Le Pen's National Front. Is this impact really so great?

Benoist: This "great impact" exists only in the minds of those who ascribe it to us. This allegation surprises me all the more since we often took a public stand against the National Front. I was regularly attacked in its media. I have not the slightest sympathy for a movement which, by manipulating the population's fears and confusion, *de facto* intensifies xenophobia by letting the French believe that immigration is the cause of all their problems. National identity is a real problem and so is immigration. Such problems cannot be solved merely by finding a scapegoat. Identity is not an unchangeable essence that remains the same and is not affected by outside influences. On the contrary, identity is a dynamic process by which a people moulds itself and by which it also shapes others. Identity has more than one definition, and one does not defend it by retreating into a bunker. Le Pen defends French identity against others. I defend the identity of all people while retaining solidarity with my own identity. The principle "my country, right or wrong," implies that under no circumstances can a people be wrong.

One has to have the courage to admit that the real causes of the destruction of identity are internal. Immigrants are not to blame when it is impossible for the French to lead a life corresponding to their own essence. Immigrants are also not responsible for the subjugation to the logic of commodities that has destroyed all solidarity and torn apart the social fabric. Immigrants cannot be blamed for colonizing France when the French watch only American films on TV. It is also not the case that French identity is endangered because there are immigrants. On the contrary, identity has already been lost — which explains why France cannot deal with immigration.

Historically, the phenomenon of immigration was triggered by the worldwide

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expansion of capitalism. Those who remain silent about capitalism should not complain about immigration.

Mohler and Stein: Unlike France, Germany has a serious sovereignty deficit. Occupation forces are still in the country and there is no national consensus beyond political parties as in France. Germans cannot afford a retreat into cultural matters.

Benoist: Historically there has always been sovereignty. Such, however, is not the case with the nation-state. Therefore, one should not tie the one to the other. Nation as a political idea has existed only since the French Revolution. Dumont has shown how the nation developed along with modern individualism.

The French concept of the nation-state came into being with Jacobinism. It destroyed local identities as well as regional culture and languages. This concept also became widespread in Germany, thanks primarily to Fichte. Throughout its long history, Europe has developed many different political forms besides the nation-state: the polis, the empire, the federation, etc. I have the notion of a federal model based on the principles of subsidiarity and inequality — a balance of the particular and the universal, with unity at the top and democracy at the bottom. Regions should be as autonomous as possible. As for the nation-state, it has become obsolete.

In Germany people are bothered by the presence of foreign armies on German soil. There is, however, another, much worse form of occupation. "Dallas" on TV and Euro-Disney in the countryside are more effective forms of American occupation than a mere military contingent of GIs. Nowadays borders no longer provide any guarantee. They cannot protect against the occupation of the mind.

Mohler and Stein: What do you consider the religious foundations and the historical character of Europe? What do you think it means "to be a pagan"?

Benoist: "To be a pagan" is a purely philosophical matter. It means identification with a value system which locates both agonality and harmony within a manifold world seen as the only one, instead of identification with a value system which devalues the world in favor of another one posited as something "beyond." That means that I prefer Heraclitus and Parmenides to St. Paul, or the universe of the Veden to the one of scholasticism. These worldviews, which have confronted each other for millennia, are neither from yesteryear nor tomorrow but are eternal. I should add that I have no sympathy for sects or folkloristic reconstructions.

Mohler and Stein: Is it possible to transpose to Germany the concept of right-wing Gramscism developed in France?

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Benoist: I was always astonished by the success of an idea to which the New Right has only dedicated two or three articles. Since political changes are generally preceded by a conceptual transformation, Gramsci set for intellectuals the task to venture out on the level of values which determine public opinion. I do not see why this should not apply to Germany if it applies elsewhere.

Mohler and Stein: Do you consider cooperation between the French New Right and today's German Right fruitful?

Benoist: Certainly — especially because of the differences. Many see this as a contradiction. However, I think they complement each other. Historically, the French often took the role of accelerator during the process of the invention and the spread of ideas. The Germans had an essential impact on the elaboration of these concepts. Both are necessary. The New Right has always been receptive to the works of various German theoreticians. Paradoxically, these authors often return to Germany. I consider personal and intellectual contacts quite fruitful. Of course, there is no institutionalization of these contacts as, e. g., in the form of an "International." After all, in Germany the French New Right is not officially represented by anyone.*

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*. This interview was conducted during Benoist's visit to Germany to participate in a conference which was disrupted and during which Benoist himself was beaten up. "Attempts to prevent Benoist's talk does not indicate much confidence in arguments or in the ability to judge . . . .The claim for reason, which can only be developed in dialogue, is an integral part of self-undertanding of the democratic Left" wrote *Tageszeitung* before the conference, about the quasi-withdrawal of the invitation to Benoist. As subsequent events demonstrated, in Germany political discussion seems to have been replaced by the violence of street gangs — in this case by a Berlin subgroup of the "*Autonomen AG*" — as it is described in the following letter by Benoist. "To My German Friends: A few months ago I received an invitation from 'Kunst & Kultur GmbH' to participate (in collaboration with DS-Kultur sponsored by the Humboldt University) on February 6 in a panel discussion at Humboldt University Berlin within the framework of a discussion ('Otherness — Patterns of Culture in Industrial Society') on the subject: 'Within the Limits of Enlightenment: What is the Place of "the Other"?' I accepted the invitation since the proposed subject was and is of great interest to me. Besides, I looked forward to speaking at Humboldt University where Ernst Niekisch — the author of the famous anti-Hitler pamphlet 'Hitler — A German Destiny' (1932) — had taught after 1945 and particularly since I had written a longer introduction for the 1991 French translation of his essay, which I had edited. Five other scholars were to participate on the panel: Eckhardt Barthel, an SPD foreign expert, Hamadi El-Aouni, a political scientist, Dietmar Kamper, a sociologist, Bernd Nizschke, a philosopher, and Renate Reschke, an aestheticist. My lecture was entitled, 'Against Racism and Xenophobia — Toward the Identity of People.' On the morning of February 6, I arrived by plane in Berlin. At the airport I was met by an organizer who accompanied me to the hotel and who informed me immediately that the announcement of my participation had led to protests, distribution of leaflets and death-threats. The day before, Professor Marlies Dürkop, the president of Humboldt University, used the protests as a pretense to cancel the scheduled debate within the university.

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III

Telos: Given the nature of the July 15 appeal there is no way to avoid confronting the charge of racism, fascism, anti-Semitism, etc. As far as we have been able to ascertain by reading David Barney, Charles Champetier and C. Levirose, *La Nouvelle Inquisition: Ses Acteurs, Ses Méthodes, Ses Victimes — Essai sur le Terrorisme Intellectuel et la Police de la Pensée* (Paris: Le Labyrinthe, 1993), none of your accusers has ever pointed to anything you yourself have written along these lines. In other words, there seems to be no "smoking gun." Moreover, you have explicitly condemned Nazism, racism and anti-Semitism. You have even contributed an essay to *L'Evenement du Jeudi* for a special issue on anti-Semitism, edited by Jean-François Kahn (one of the most celebrated Jewish critics of Le Pen and the National Front). In addition. you have pointed to Jews and Vietnamese as examples of vibrant organic communities which have successfully resisted

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On February 6 the newspaper discussed — on the front page — this affair under the headline 'Threat vs. Argument' (in the center part: 'Right-Winger Censured'). The organizers told me that under the circumstances they had given up plans to hold a public debate and instead had decided to hold a private discussion in conjunction with a radio broadcast. It was to take place on the same day at 7 PM at the New Society For Literature (Rosenthaler Straße 38, O-1020 Berlin). The media had been informed. As agreed, I arrived at 6 PM in the rooms of the New Society For Literature situated on the first floor. The organizers were not there. There were also no policemen. Instead, I was confronted by about 20 "autonomous" anarchists in black clothing, who recognized me and who let me know unmistakably that they would try to prevent my participation in the discussion. I was photographed by one of them twice. This commando group forced me to walk down to the ground-floor and dragged me to the street. After approximately 150 meters they detained me and started beating me so brutally that I suffered several injuries and bruises on my face. Then they disappeared and left me lying on the street. My glasses were stolen. Another pair of glasses, which I had in my pocket, was broken. I succeeded in returning to the hotel by taxi. Half an hour later the police — brandishing guns — picked me up at the hotel since they feared that the commandos might have followed me. They drove me back to the headquarters of the New Society For Literature. There I was able to participate in part of the discussion, which had been shortened because of the circumstances. I gave a statement to the authorities investigating the crime. At 10:30 PM, along with 8 discussion participants, I was driven to the Staatschutzpolizei STASI Berlin-Tempelhof. There we were interrogated by policemen who were definitely interested in identifying the members of the commando unit. The interrogation lasted until 5 AM. I declined to be taken to the hospital to have my injuries treated. I also declined to press charges. Afterwards the police drove me back to my hotel and protected me until the end of my stay. On the morning of February 7, I gave interviews. At 3 PM, I flew back to Paris. Out of fear that such violence could occur once again, 'Kunst & Kultur GmbH' decided to cancel the second panel ('Otherness: Inside, Outside, Everywhere. Border Crossings as Utopia') which was to have taken place on February 15 with the participation of Thomas Kuczynsti, Arno Kösnne, Julius Schoeps, Olaf Schwenke and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg. So far, I have participated in more than twenty countries on panels and conferences. Nowhere else have I ever experienced anything of the kind. These incidents betray a political attitude that is spreading throughout Europe. I thank the trustees of 'Kunst & Kultur GmbH' for their friendly and courageous support."

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cultural homogenization. Yet, from the early years of GRECE to the present you have associated with individuals, organizations and a publishing house tainted with racism, revisionism and neo-Nazism. In this regard, Roger-Pol Droit's charges in Le Monde are not new (e.g., there are revisionists on Nouvelle Ecole's editorial board — Bernard Notin, Jean-Claude Rivière; you work with the Tübingen publishing house Grabert, etc.). How do you account for these associations in light of your current beliefs and commitments?

Benoist: It would be easy to answer that, thirty years ago, I was involved as a student in radical Right organizations. That was in the very special context of the Algerian war, at a time when politicization was particularly intense in the University. When I launched *Nouvelle Ecole* in 1968 some of my collaborators had a similar political background. That was the beginning of a "long march" — an intellectual evolution lasting over a quarter of a century. Unfortunately, a radical Rightist past renders one suspect forever, unlike a radical Leftist past, which is usually readily forgotten and "forgiven"! But that is not the point. The issue is how to judge someone whose only occupation for over thirty years has been to read, write and publish books and articles other than by evaluating what he writes and publishes? For people such as those who published the July 1993 appeal, what one writes and says do not matter. They are only interested in the views they would like to see expressed. This is the reason why the publication of this laughable appeal was not meant to open an intellectual debate but rather to isolate me from such a debate. In any case, there can be no debate with people who are not interested in what one actually says, or who seriously believe that one spends one's whole life expressing views they do not really believe in, probably in the hope of legitimating views one is supposed to have but does not express! This is a very strange way of reasoning. After all, what an intellectual leaves when he dies is only what he has published. By applying the same reasoning one could claim that Karl Marx was a fierce opponent of communism who wrote the opposite because he wanted to disguise his true beliefs!

I have published more than 25 books and 5000 articles. The appeal people are unable to quote any passages from this material to substantiate their charges. So they have to look elsewhere. The method is hardly new. It is the old witch-hunting McCarthyite guilty-by-association method. This is all too convenient, even if dishonest because it makes it possible to associate anyone with anything, without paying any attention to what really matters. Accordingly, what one writes does not matter; the content of the books one has not written, however, does matter simply because they have also been published by one's publisher. Views do not matter, but the place where they have appeared does matter, etc. This method has to be extraordinarily selective. My books have been translated in seven or eight foreign languages and by more than fifteen foreign publishers (including five in Germany). One focuses on the only book which can be used (i.e., the one published by Grabert Verlag) and forgets

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the others. I am a journalist and part of my job is to meet and associate with people. Thus I have acquaintances and friends of every possible political persuasion. The appeal people select the ones they can use, even if they are only ten or fifteen, and ignore the others, even if they are hundreds. They do not care about what is published in *Nouvelle Ecole*, but concentrate on what two or three collaborators did or said outside the context of their collaboration with the journal, etc. There is no need to discuss these methods much more. They speak for themselves. I do not select my publishers (they buy the rights of my books and negotiate directly with my French publishers). Being published by this or that publisher does not mean I agree with the content of all the other books they publish. I am not (nor do I wish to be) in a position to control what people who occasionally or even regularly publish something in the journals I edit can do, say or write in their private or public life. Nor am I supposed to share the views of all the people I know. In fact, I am extremely pleased to know people who do not share my opinions. I am responsible only for what I write and publish. For some people, that does not matter. They prefer to speculate about what they would like you to do. This is the McCarthyite method, which can be used to prove that everyone is guilty of everything. This is also Freudian caricature: if one denies something, this denial is a sort of confirmation. So the more one writes against racism and xenophobia, the more it proves one does not believe it. Finally, words like racism, fascism, etc. end up losing whatever meaning they may have had. They become part of a ritualistic theological vocabulary used for excommunications. Fortunately, these people are losing all credibility. The failure of the July 3 appeal is proof of that. One year later, they have to defend themselves for having been so ridiculous.

Telos: In his article "From Race to Culture" (translated in this issue of *Telos*), Pierre-André Taguieff traces the history of GRECE and of the French New Right from its beginning in 1968 to the mid-1980s. It is a rather tortuous trajectory. Originally, GRECE pushed sociobiology (Jensen and all), elitism, inequality and scientism, with the biological dimension being particularly strong. Now GRECE has criticized biological reductionism and has called for cultural pluralism in France. In earlier articulations of the "right to difference," GRECE (in particular, Guillaume Faye) called for the return of immigrants to their countries of origin. Presently, in sharp opposition to the National Front, it calls for solidarity with immigrants, recognizes the reality of their continued presence in France and contraposes a plurality of organic ethnic communities to the cultural homogenization demanded by all of the French political parties from the far Left to the far Right. How did these transitions come about? Is there a logic to this trajectory? What remains constant throughout besides a commitment to particularity and otherness contraposed to pseudo-universality and homogenization (precisely the same objectives of Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* — a book decisive in shaping the

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theoretical outlook of that sector of the New Left associated with *Telos* since the appearance of its very first issue on May 1, 1968, exactly the very same week GRECE was founded in Lyon)?

Benoist: It is not all that tortuous a trajectory. It only shows that the so-called French New Right has never been committed to any kind of dogmatic catechism, but was a real intellectual effort with no preconceived ideas. Originally, in the early 1970s, the New Right dealt with biological topics. Primarily, it was a reaction against the then prevalent view that nothing is inherited and everything is decided by the environment. Such a view was more or less dominant at that time, although very few people would defend it today. That was also the time of the controversies about genetics and IQ (engaging not only Jensen, who is certainly not a sociobiologist, but also Eysenck, Lorenz, Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Ardrey Desmond Morris, etc). The New Right assumed that biology was going to become the queen of the sciences during the last quarter of this century. That was not so naive in view of the actual expansion of biotechnologies! At any rate, to recognize the biological dimension of human life is not the same as explaining everything through biology. I was a good friend of the late Arthur Koestler, and I have always bought his argument against any kind of reductionism, including biologistic ones. As Konrad Lorenz once said: "If you say that man is an animal you are right, but if you say that he is nothing but an animal you are very wrong!" (Koestler himself used to talk about "nothing else but-ism"). So it would be a mistake to believe that the New Right ever tried to turn sociology into an appendage of zoology! Very early on it emphasized that the chief determinants of human life are of a social, cultural and historical nature. I would add that the main question is not whether people are completely free or only slightly free in relation to their nature, but what they do and want to do with that part of them which is free. This is the only interesting problem, because it is the only one about which we can do anything. Scientism is something else. Twenty years ago, I was influenced by logical positivism, mainly by the so-called "Vienna Circle," by people such as Rudolf Carnap, Hans Reichenbach, Moritz Schlick, as well as Ludwig Wittgenstein — not so far, therefore, from Russell, Popper and analytic philosophy. That gradually faded and disappeared completely when I became acquainted with other schools — not only Adorno and Horkheimer, but also Husserl, Heidegger, Scheler, Gehlen, Plessner, Gadamer, etc.

About immigration, a year ago the New Right published a special issue of the journal *Éléments*, whose main orientation you correctly summarize. Since then there has not been much evolution on the subject. Over a decade ago I published an article titled "Solidarity with Immigrants." One should not forget that the phenomenon of immigration is relatively new in Europe. Of course, European nations have always incorporated foreign people, but they were not constituted by immigration, like the US. Considering their own past, Americans can more easily than Europeans see immigration as a normal

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phenomenon (even if sometimes they do not). But it should not be forgotten that immigration is the result of something very negative: in general immigrants do not leave their native countries for pleasure but in order to find better living conditions. The vast majority of them would prefer to find at home the conditions they are forced to search for elsewhere. From that viewpoint, immigration is not at all normal, and I do not see why we should consider normal a situation in which people are so deprived that they have to look for decent living conditions in places other than those where they were born. If the situation in Algeria was better than it is, some of the immigrants of Algerian origin who presently live in France would prefer to return there. To call for the repatriation of immigrants is to call for the possibility of this return (assuming immigrants want to do so), which would also mean a closer cooperation between European countries and the Third World. It is certainly not a call for authoritarian pressures to force them to go! Anyway, the fact is that, for the time being, most of the immigrants who came to Europe are there to stay. So the problem is, what is the best way to integrate them? Also, to integrate them to what: an economic way of life, a society, a nation? I am not a Jacobin, so I do not believe in assimilation. To assimilate is to lose much in exchange for mostly dreams and illusions. The dream of a melting pot, as conceived by Israel Zangwill, has also failed in the US. That is why it may be better to approach the problem from an organic, communitarian viewpoint, not as a way to generalize any apartheid, but as a way to integrate a society and help it escape cultural homogenization on a global scale. Unfortunately, this is hard to understand in a country like France, where the Jacobin heritage leads all politicians to deal with immigrants the way the Revolution dealt with the Jews: everything for the individuals, nothing for the people — i.e., nothing for a common identity and roots. This example should answer your question about what has remained constant in the New Right's positions throughout the years. The desire to maintain a diversity of communities and cultures, which are the wealth of mankind, was a constant. The main problem today is to find the cultural and political means to resist the technological, economic and mass-media-driven homogenization of the world.

Telos: Although you have been openly critical of the National Front, there are some puzzling connections. In addition to Pierre Vial (who along with you and Guillaume Faye was one of GRECE's leading theorists), some of the National Front's most influential leaders, such as Le Gallou, Mégret and Blot, came from the ranks of the New Right. Secondly, the National Front's major ideological transitions were anticipated by GRECE. Initially, in 1972, the National Front was explicitly anti-immigrant and went nowhere politically. Only after the development of GRECE's formulation of the "right to difference" did it find a respectable theoretical framework to legitimate its manifestly racist, xenophobic and anti-immigrant position. Similarly, the National Front's transition from a pro-Reagan, pro-Thatcher position to its present anti-Americanism and third-worldism (after the Gulf war) was also anticipated by GRECE.

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Benoist: Fifteen years ago, the National Front received less than 1% of the vote. Today it receives around three million ballots (more or less 12% of the vote). These come from all sectors of society. It would be astonishing if the New Right would have been the only group from which the National Front recruited. At any rate, among New Right leaders only Pierre Vial defected to the National Front. Mégret was never involved with the New Right. Biot and Le Gailou left in the early 1970s to join the Gaullist party (the RPR). Ten years later they defected to join the National Front. This is part of their own personal evolution and can hardly be considered a defection from the New Right.

Your description of the history of the National Front is inaccurate! It is not true that the National Front registered its first successes after having found a respectable theoretical framework in the formulation of the "right to difference." In a general (or local) election, people are not interested in theoretical frameworks. On the contrary, it was because of its radical xenophobic and anti-immigrant position that the National Front gained most of the vote. Moreover, the National Front never tried to elaborate any theoretical frameworks! Le Pen may have mentioned the "right to difference" once or twice, as he mentions everything he thinks he can use. This is irrelevant. Le Pen is not stupid (nor is he without any political savvy), but he is not all that concerned with theories and ideas. His party is a typical demagogic movement which tries to catch everyone by using whatever it can. It exploits the people's anti-immigrant feeling, xenophobia, fear of crime and unemployment, resentment against the old parties and politicians. In the National Front there are people holding opposite ideas (when they have any), even at leadership level. Le Pen is not unhappy with that: when his lieutenants fight among themselves, he can be sure no one will take his place. People do not vote for the National Front because it became "respectable." On the contrary they vote for it because they find this party different from "respectable" ones. Similarly, there was no transition within the National Front from a pro-Reagan position to any current anti-Americanism. At the height of Reagan's popularity, Le Pen wanted to be the French Reagan. When the mass-media was describing Boris Yeltsin as a populist challenger to Gorbachev, he wanted to be the French Yeltsin. He attacked the US within the context of the GATT negotiations. After that, he went to Chile and praised the work done by Pinochet's Chicago boys as an example to be emulated. His opposition to the Gulf war (which was shared by many people both on the Right and the Left, including some Gaullist leaders, the Communist Party and the friends of Jean-Pierre Chevénénement) was not welcomed by its natural constituency. There is no logic or coherence in all the fact that Le Pen's views about Europe have changed many times. So have his views concerning social or economic problems. In a way, it would be very flattering if the National Front had succeeded merely because it had borrowed some New Right ideas. But that is not true. Yes, I have publicly criticized the National Front. I think its provisional growth (I say provisional because the whole phenomenon is a one-man show: without Le Pen, the National Front

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would immediately collapse and split into several factions) will prevent the appearance of an intelligent Right for at least fifteen years. The only interesting thing about this phenomenon is that it shows how tired people are of the old parties and disappointed by the New Class. The other negative side is that this feeling is exploited by a party which uses scapegoat tactics: if things are bad, it is the fault of immigrants; without immigrants, there would no crime, no unemployment, no identity crisis, no major problems, etc. This prevents people from understanding the real dimensions of the problems, i. e., that without immigrants the situation would be more or less the same, and that immigrants are as much victims as everyone else. But it is also a perverse game. Mitterrand used the National Front to divide the Right. The parliamentary Right used it to speak against xenophobia while taking extremely hard measures against immigrants. The Left used it to hide its ideological delusions and its theoretical vacuum under an anachronistic anti-fascist discourse ruling out any serious debate. I do not see how the New Right could benefit from such a situation.

Telos: Taguieff argues that the "right to difference" is the basis for a differentialist variant of racism based on culture instead of biology. You seem to argue that the "right to difference" lays the groundwork for a new, differentialist variant of anti-racism. Taguieff claims you call for an absolutization of differences and the incompatibility between cultures, whereas you reject this extrapolation of his understanding of "difference," which is predicated on respect for the other. At any rate, it seems that your concept of "difference" comes from what could be called recognition theory in German philosophy (Hegel's master-slave relation; Gadamer's fusion of horizons) where the other is never absolutized and negated but acknowledged as the presupposition for the very identity of those doing the recognizing. Now one of the problems with this approach is that, contrary to the vulgar Marxist assumption that an *Aufhebung* takes place whereby the slave becomes the master and the master the slave, no such thing ever occurs in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Rather, the master turns first into the lord, then into the bourgeois, and finally into the bureaucrat.

If such is the case, the transposition of the dialectic of master and slave to the logic of cultural autonomy provides a metaphysical guarantee for the perpetuation of the subordinate status of other cultures *vis à vis* the predominant European culture. Anyway, this notion of an eternal difference seems untenable. Culture is not something established once and for all. It is a process in which it constantly constitutes and reconstitutes itself. As can be seen from the American experience — the most extensive effort to transform cultural pluralism into a new culture *(e pluribus unum)* — new cultural identities do develop when a variety of cultures coexist, without necessarily resulting in the obliteration of particularity and otherness. Only with the institutionalization of multiculturalism does the opposite happen, i.e., particular cultures are artificially frozen into fixed, homogeneous stereotypes resulting in the sort of

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bellum omnium contra omnes presently developing in the US and elsewhere (Bosnia is only the other side of the same coin: the collapse of an artificial national culture leaves people helpless and therefore susceptible to what are primarily artificially reconstituted traditions).

The question here is this: is it possible to constitute new cultures in contexts of intense interaction between different peoples, or does all this chatter about difference mean irrevocable cultural apartheid? Is the universalist horizon constitutive of European civilization from Plato on down through Christianity and its secularized variants (i.e., Western culture — we find your invention of a pagan tradition highly suspect . . .) anything more than an imperialist smokescreen? And if the latter is the case, what exactly is this European culture? Whatever it may be, it definitely has nothing to do with Thor or a bunch of wannabe *Übermenschen* with horns sticking out of their hats chasing endangered species through the bushes.

Benoist: If you look at Taguieff's latest book, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite: Jalons d'une Analyse Critique* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 1994), you will see that he has changed his mind about his thesis concerning differentialist racism, and rightly so. A racism based on culture rather than biology would be a racism without races. And without any commitment to a hierarchical view of cultures, there would be no racism. In fact, no serious racial theory can be based on culture instead of biology. Culture is culture and biology is nature. Culture cannot be substituted for nature any more than nature can be substituted for culture. The "right to difference" is not different from what you call recognition theory (this expression is even better, because it escapes the reference to a special kind of right). It is also close to the politics of recognition as proposed by communitarian authors such as Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, or some feminist writers. It emphasizes the need to recognize the collective dimension of identity and the fact that any theory based on the abstract idea of an unencumbered self is wrong. This is certainly not to open the door to a general or irrevocable cultural apartheid. As for myself, I do not call for an absolutization of differences. This would be rather foolish, because a difference can only differ in comparison to something else (part of the definition of difference is that it cannot be absolutized without ceasing to be a difference). The same can be said about the so-called incompatibility between cultures. There is obviously a compatibility between cultures, even if the possibility of communication is rarely complete (it is also limited between individuals). In fact, the "right to difference" or "politics of recognition" is the very basis for a real dialogue between cultures, where each can enrich the other. Without this recognition there is no possibility of dialogue but only a monologue by several, i.e., exchanging the same again for the same, without being able to recognize as positive the otherness of the other. This recognition must be free of any hierarchical encroachment. To make a hierarchical comparison requires a criterion which cannot be identified with any of the entities being compared. This

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criterion is clearly missing when comparing different cultures (or genders). Here one can apply Gödel's theorem: there is no culture of all cultures. All theories claiming that a culture or civilization is "better" or "superior" to another are clearly based on such a mistake. People believing in the superiority of Western civilization take their own civilization as the universal ideal which can be used to measure others. This is clearly illogical and tautological (it only means that Western civilization is Western). This is why I cannot understand how recognition theory can be understood through the dialectics of master and slave. You are right when you say that in this theory "the other is never absolutized and negated but acknowledged as the presupposition for the very identity of those doing the recognizing." But you still have to add that this recognition must be carried out independently of any hierarchical view. It is not recognition of the respective places of master and slave in terms of an external criterion independent of both (their respective places which could afterwards be eventually exchanged through *Aufhebung*). It is recognition on an equal basis and of the very fact that there are no criteria by which to organize a hierarchy. In this view the "right to difference" removes all confusion between universal and particular values — a confusion used to legitimate different forms of oppression, conversion and colonialism (to convert is always to impose a loss of identity, hence to oppress, and it does not matter if this conversion is carried out on the pretext of the absolute truth of the Christian faith, the so-called superiority of the white race, the universal value of liberal parliamentary democracy, the universal virtues of the market, the universal need for development, etc. In all cases, one particular model is hypostatized on the level of a universal model).

But the very concept of difference remains to be defined. Of course, there is no "eternal difference"! A difference or an identity is not an absolute nor an essence. It is always constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through a dialogical attitude toward others. We all belong to several communities, and our identity is a function of all of them. Identity is not the past; it is not a property; it is not (or not merely) a matter of origin, of having such and such characteristics. In relation to Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur (especially to the distinction made by the latter between identity *ipse* and identity *idem*), I would say that identity is basically a narrative process. Phenomenologically, it is a reflexive narration of which the subject is not a "me" or an "us" constituted once for all, but a constantly redefined "self" which must constantly produce and reproduce the narration necessary to create and recreate its own conditions of existence. In that sense, identity is clearly different from what is identical or eternal. It is what is maintained throughout changing processes, not as the same, but as an always particular way of changing or not changing. Finally, identity is also behavior: I share the identity of the people with similar problems. This has nothing to do with "homogenous stereotypes," nor with "the institutionalization of multiculturalism." I do not have ready-made solutions concerning how to carry out such a recognition. But I do not believe in any

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institutional or authoritarian solution. Good institutions are the result of basic and organic social processes, not the causes or the best ways to give birth to these processes. It could even be argued that the very idea of structuring such a recognition is already dangerous. What is important is to accept the principle of recognition, to recognize without dictating any specific kind of social behavior. What matters here is the generality of the principle opposing those who want to be recognized without themselves recognizing others.

"What exactly is European culture?" is a very interesting question, but one so complex as to require a whole book just to try to provide an answer. First, Europe is diversity itself: every time it is reduced to a particular characteristic it is simultaneously impoverished. Because it is so diverse, the reflexive narration it produces can only be speculative in nature. In that sense, the European mind is above all philosophical. Philosophy can only arise where there are no definitive behaviors and solutions, and philosophy means distance from oneself — a distance which generates both tragedy and irony. In that sense, the US seems different. Since its foundation it has not changed very much, if at all. Basically, the general system is the same. From the viewpoint of European history, a radical change of the people's very social basis can always be envisioned. I wonder if there are many Americans who can imagine their country without its Constitution. This could limit their ability to do philosophy, understood as a propensity to change radically one's worldview. Of course, through the centuries this European tradition took many different forms. I am afraid that here you mistake my position on pagan tradition. I leave "Vikinging-around in the woods" as well as "wannabe *Übermenschen* with horns" to the lunatic fringe of the New Age! Europe existed long before Christianity and during these millennia it has produced a large number of major cultures and civilizations. We know that religious systems are closely connected with social life as a whole and that they can be interpreted primarily as value systems. I do not want to elaborate too much on that subject (to which I have already devoted two books), but I would like to recall Max Weber's analysis of the polytheism of values. Of course, the comparison between monotheistic and polytheistic systems is not merely a matter of numbers (how many Gods?). When psychologists such as James Hillmann or sociologists such as Michel Maffeoli refer to "polytheism," it is not a matter of mere fantasy or nostalgia. They are concerned with one of the possible sources of inspiration for today. Similarly, it is not by chance that the Green movements seem to be more at ease with old cosmic religions than with the biblical imperative mandating man as the master of the earth. No one has to privilege reading the Bible instead of the Vedas, the Baghavad-Gita, Parmenides and Aristotle or the Homeric stories. Of course, often European Antiquity was as violent as other ages, but this violence was not based on a principle of intolerance. The people within the Roman Empire had to accept Rome's authority, but they did not have to give up their beliefs. (In fact, in Rome there was even an altar to the unknown God). In the West, monotheistic civilization rapidly evolved into a theocratic

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state which tended to exclude any form of plurality. Even the secular nation-state was conceived on that model, and the moment this state began to collapse social links also began to dissolve.

Telos: In the effort to vindicate particularity, specificity and otherness, you seem to go a little too far by denying universality altogether, or denying any value to it. But it is only from the viewpoint of universality that particularity itself can be recognized and, at any rate, independently of some sort of nomological universality it is impossible even to negotiate the autonomy of the other. You seem to identify the sort of universality characterizing Western civilization with Judeo-Christianity and totalitarianism, against which you contrapose a mythological, authentically European paganism (lifted out of Nietzsche) standing presumably for freedom and self-determination. Now, Horkheimer and Adorno came up with a similar analysis of what they called the domination of the concept and identified this totalitarian involution with the logic of the Enlightenment — secularized Christianity. They also sought to vindicate particularity but not by recycling mythological figures (which, incidentally, they identified with the fascist solution). Rather, in an equally unsatisfactory mythological fashion, they found recourse in mimesis with nature — a confused theological cop-out which has been attacked ever since as passive, resigned and, in Lukàcs' extremist Marxist formulation, conformist and apologetic. Neither solution seems satisfactory. A better account may be found in Husserl's phenomenology, where the function of the first and second reduction as inextricable moments of living experience is precisely to deconstruct this tendentially oppressive totality and (what Derrida and his deconstructionist epigones seem to forget) reconstitute it from the inevitably unilateral perspective of the particular (although Husserl himself remained embroiled with the essentialism of the *eidos* and the resulting formalism). Within such a framework universality remains a permanently incomplete horizon dependent on the particular perspective to provide (from the presupposed cultural patrimony of that particular perspective) the missing dimension. Such a post-Enlightenment reading avoids the totalitarian rap, while at the same time privileging the particular. Your pagan solution ends up artificially (and, one could add, indefensibly) dichotomizing a totalitarian Judeo-Christian Western civilization and its presumably libertarian-pagan European counterpart. Geopolitically this phony distinction translates into a contraposition of American *Zivilisation* (i.e., Hollywood *kitsch* and what Adorno and Horkheimer theorized as the culture industry) and European *Kultur*, which feeds right into the Russian nationalists wishful prefiguration of a reconstituted *Mitteleuropa* no longer united against Russia, as in the early part of the century, but characterized by a new German-Russian alliance. Is this, or something of the sort, your position today? Europeans in general and the Frankfurt School in particular could never make heads or tails out of America but you have been in the US several times, and should know that, notwithstanding all of Hollywood's mystifications, it is an extremely heterogeneous society,

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the hegemonic parts of which are nothing but a cultural extension and development of the best of European culture.

Benoist: I do not confuse universality and universalism. In a way, Heidegger helped me make this distinction with his own contraposition of ontology and metaphysics. In the same way that difference makes sense only in relation to something else and cannot be absolutized without becoming meaningless, particularity cannot be imagined independently of universality, nor multiplicity independently of unity. You are right to claim that, independently of some sort of nomological universality, it is impossible even to negotiate the autonomy of the other. What matters is the equilibrium between multiplicity and unity, the level where unity has to be thought or established (this is a vital question in relation to political institutions), and the way each of the two concepts is to be reached. Universalism begins by imposing a preconceived or abstract form to the particular. To the contrary, I believe we can only reach universality through particulars, not the other way round. I also agree with Heidegger's view of modernity (especially its technological dimension) as an accomplishment of the metaphysics of subjectivity. This accomplishment is all the more dramatic if one interprets the various universalisms as disguised forms of ethnocentrism. This occurs every time I believe my views constitute universal truth (or when I believe in a universal truth which, coincidentally, turns out to be identical with my own views). To that kind of metaphysics of subjectivity, which is the basis of today's destructive individualism (with is concomitant inflation of "rights" claims), you can only oppose a principle of generality — which is also based on the generality of principles (as a general frame for particularity). The direct consequence of this principle is that I am not the source of values: my belongings, memberships, commitments and so on are not the truth. For example, the "right to difference" is only valuable on a general level. It legitimates my commitment to my people, but only conditionally: I cannot be any more committed to my people if my people oppress another people. In other words, the principle of recognition of identities is superior to any identity as such. Take the old English saying "My country, right or wrong." It can be understood in various ways. It can be taken to mean that even if my country is wrong, for me it will be always right (the worst interpretation). It can also be understood to mean that, even if it is wrong, I cannot forget that it is my country (somewhat softer). But there is another interpretation, and this one focuses on the word "wrong." How can I say that my country can be wrong if I do not have a criterion of judgment beyond those provided to me by virtue of my belonging to that country? That is the point. Without such a criterion, my country will always appear right to me (this is the way of reasoning of all xenophobic movements, which tramples the metaphysics of subjectivity from an individual level to a collective one). Recognizing the need for a general principle is to commit oneself to a form of positive "nomological universality." It has nothing to do with a "pagan solution." Going back to the

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criticism of universalism, I agree that universalism is to be identified with the "domination of the concept" and, as Horkheimer and Adorno understood very well, with a "totalitarian involution of the logic of the Enlightenment — secularized Christianity." Mimesis with nature as a solution is hard to accept. Although I have much sympathy with the Greens respect for "nature," the concept is too equivocal to serve as a firm basis (see the debate about the "rights of nature" or the "intrinsic value of nature") — even if a discussion concerning man's place in nature and his relation to nature is necessary. "Recycling mythological figures" is also obscure. To resort to images against concepts is useful, but not sufficient. All ideological systems contain recycled mythological themes as well as theological concepts. This is not typical of the "fascist solution." In addition, I see fascism as a very modern — in the worst sense of the term — phenomenon hidden under archaic rhetoric, and communism as an archaic phenomenon hidden behind modern discourse. That is why I think that Husserl's "post-Enlightenment" solution is one of the best approaches. This influence of Husserl's philosophy is reflected in the title of the journal I founded in 1988: *Krisis* — although I think there is also much value in Heidegger's philosophy and in postmodern thought (which cannot be reduced to Derrida's views nor to the somewhat fashionable and often surprising versions of his so-called "deconstructionism" in the US).

Yes, I have visited the US many times and I have many American friends. There is much that I like in America and it would be stupid to reduce it to Disneyland or to the commercial Hollywood sub-culture. However, it is also true that I have been very critical of the US, though my criticisms have never been inspired by any kind of French chauvinism. (I am a bad French patriot, and many of my criticisms of the US could also be directed against France). This again could be the subject of a very long discussion. Let me just mention a few points. First, I believe that in the future Europe and the US will gradually part ways. Their interests are not the same, and I think they will become more and more divergent. With the end of the communist system, "Atlanticism" does not mean much any more, even if Europe is still unable or unwilling to organize itself appropriately. Second, I disagree with the importance of American influence in the world (whether it is growing or slowly diminishing is another matter). I am not against foreign influences, but I do not want these influences reduced to only one, and they will have to be reciprocated. A predicament such as today's, when American films, songs, TV programs and so on constitute more than the half of what can be heard and seen throughout the world, while foreign productions represent almost nothing in America, is clearly not normal. To defend this situation in terms of the laws of the market is to resort to myth. The market reflects power relations: it does not select what is best but what is strongest. (Believing that the strongest is the best is Social Darwinism, and one of the bases of racism.) But it is not just a problem of mass media. Economic, political and military influences are also a fact. The US would never accept a European intervention in Nicaragua. Yet it considers

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it normal to make war on Iraq and to keep ships in the Mediterranean. To use one of Carl Schmitt's expressions, it is time for Europe to have its own Monroe Doctrine. Thirdly, there is the problem of the nature of the US political, social and "psychological" system. Obviously I have profound sympathies for the principle of federalism as originally envisioned (while the US was being created before its subsequent distortion). At the same time, however, I think the US has always had great difficulty understanding what Schmitt calls the essence of politics — especially the fact that it cannot be reduced to (or limited by) morals or economics. From that viewpoint, I remain to be convinced that the most celebrated works of the Founding Fathers have much political relevance. I do not believe that men "are born free and equal," and I am not interested in the "pursuit of happiness"! US foreign policy often has been disastrous, mainly because of its inability to understand the existence of the external world. George Washington's farewell speech gave rise to isolationism, while the myth of "Manifest Destiny" legitimated all kinds of interventionism. But isolationism and interventionism are only two sides of the same universalism, i.e., the conviction that the American system is the best and only possible one throughout the world. I do not believe that the US is a "free country," a new Promised Land or an example to be emulated by everyone. In domestic politics, the two-party system seems more like a one-party system with two main factions. I do not like the circus-like character of American political conventions. I also do not like the moralism which forced Nixon to resign because he lied to the people and Gary Hart to quit the presidential race because he had a mistress. A good president is one who makes good politics, not one who tells the truth or obediently follows Christian monogamy. There are too many spin-doctors, televangelists and Sunday school preachers in American politics. You say that "the hegemonic parts" of the US "are nothing but a cultural extension and development of the best of European culture." Well . . . After all, most Founding Fathers considered European culture simply evil — an evil they had to leave behind in order to create a New World. I do not like this WASP hegemony. It is too filled with morals and economics, while lacking consideration for minorities and the poor. I do not like "Bible and business." I detest this puritan heritage, which forbids the normal expression of feelings, turns everything into a "problem" ("What's your problem?"), reduces daily life to using set formulas for solving these problems (how-to books, programs, etc.) and seems to forbid normal relations between the sexes. Frankly, there is something hysterical in the Prohibition of yesteryear and in today's campaigns against smoking, sexual harassment, sexual abuses, etc. The same goes for economics. I dislike the capitalist logic of exclusion, I do not believe in the virtues of the market and of a market society. I dislike the obsession with efficiency (efficiency for what? at which price?), the myth of winners, the view of life as competitive and as the permanent pursuit of one's best interest, the approach to cultural creations as pure commercial products. I do not want to be a winner. I am not interested in making money . . . Of course, this does not prevent me from seeing the other

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side of the coin. I love Steinbeck, Melville and Edgar Allen Poe. As a teen-ager I was in awe of American movies, at a time when cinema was still an art. Today I greatly appreciate the work of people such as Christopher Lasch, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Robert Bellah (and, of course, *Telos*, which sometimes looks more European than American). But these may be premature judgments.

Telos: Enough with the US . . . On a different issue, what is the significance of Julius Evola for the European New Right in general and you in particular (Conservative Revolution, metapolitics, neo-paganism, anti-materialism, anti-egalitarianism, empire, etc.). What about Evola's anti-Semitism? He wrote the preface for the Italian edition of the *Protocols*, he supported Mussolini's racial legislation of 1938, and he explicitly praised Codreanu's politics against the Judaic horde and the bloodthirsty activities of the Rumanian Iron Guard. How could someone like yourself, who has unambiguously condemned anti-Semitism, be silent regarding this side of Evola, which was by no means peripheral to his larger world-view? Particular communities should even have the prerogative to Viking-around in the woods worshipping sticks and stones, if they so wish — as long as they do not insist that everyone else do the same. Evola's reified view of natural being has nothing to do with this idyllic vision and, instead, entails reimposing what he thinks is a natural order on a being gone astray. Is the New Right inherently pluralistic or is its insistence on particularity only a theoretical euphemism for permanent hierarchy where the other is really considered inferior? It is one thing to criticize representative democracy as collective homogenization, mass cretinization and general deactivation of the populace, and another to criticize it on the basis of the inherent, natural and given-once-and-for-all superiority of the few (which, were they *de facto* superior, would not need to legitimate this superiority through metaphysical witchcraft: meritocracy would be sufficient).

Benoist: Why Evola? Among all the authors who have been used or cited by the New Right he is certainly not the most important. Evola belongs to the school of integral traditionalism, along with people such as René Guénon, Guido De Giorgio or Frithjof Schuon. The New Right does not belong to that school. As for myself, I have never been under his "influence." The authors who have had the greatest influence on me are Louis Dumont and/or Arthur Koestler. I have also criticized the belief in an original Tradition (in the singular and with a big T), which is clearly a myth. But it is also true that Evola published interesting and valuable works about ethics, spirituality and philosophy of religions. His work is vast and one does not have to accept all of it. Politically, he made many mistakes. However, your description of his views is a bit excessive. Under fascism, he had the courage to write publicly that he was not a fascist. He was never a member of the Fascist Party. His journal, *La Torre*, was banned by the fascist authorities in 1930 and he was continuously under attack by many of

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the regime's leaders (even if he was protected by some others). He wrote a very interesting critique of nationalism and fought violently against any form of biological racism. He opposed Giovanni Gentile at a time when Gentile was the most celebrated thinker of the fascist regime. Even his anti-Semitism, which is beyond doubt, is more complex than may appear at first sight. This is no excuse, but a thinker should not be reduced only to part of his life or part of his work. Céline's anti-Semitism does not prevent him from being recognized nowadays as one of this century's greatest literary figures. When *Telos* sought to introduce Carl Schmitt's works to the American public, you also had to explain his mistaken attitude toward the Nazis between 1933 and 1936-37. Clearly, the value of Schmitt's work lies beyond these years. The same goes for Evola. As for hierarchy and pluralism, I have already discussed them. I would just like to add that I do not even criticize "democracy as collective homogenization." This is only the result of a liberal distortion of democracy. I have published a book (*Democratie: le Problèm*) to answer traditional (Right or Left) critics of democracy. I strongly believe that the democratic process needs to be strengthened through more civic participation, more public spaces for speech and decision, precisely because I do not think democracy represents the law of the numbers but the need of a basic participation which today is the only mode of political legitimation. Finally, when one speaks of hierarchy, the first thing to be remembered is that, where hierarchy is not escapable, it must be conceived as a way to include rather than exclude anyone.

Telos: While your French critics are obviously wrong in finding you guilty by association, there is something problematic about seeing your picture constantly popping out next to nationalists, alleged fascists, and similar questionable figures in, e.g., the pages of the Russian journal *Elementy*. It becomes even more suspect when one compares the views of a Dugin concerning delusions about Russian might and a German-Russian alliance against the US with your own abhorrence of American culture, which you seem to associate with Disneyworld and Hollywood. How does the kind of anti-nationalist federalism you seem to support square with the recycled 19th century imperialism of a Dugin and other Russian nationalists dreaming about a new Russian Empire? Schmitt's concept of *Grossraum*, which Dugin has appropriated incorrectly to legitimate his crude imperialism, has nothing to do with the concept of federation, however one defines the latter. And if Empire really means federation or confederation Swiss-style, why drag out these confusing medieval remnants rather than simply sticking with the much more familiar concept of federation?

Benoist: In April 1992 I spent a week in Moscow, at Dugin's invitation. At that time I met several politicians, army generals, academics and journalists of various opinions. This was an opportunity to learn about a complex situation. Unfortunately, I quickly realized how difficult it was to communicate with people who, having been cut off from the outside world for such a long time, do

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not have the same references and experiences as someone like myself. From the viewpoint of Russia, the West seems as confusing as Russia can be for Western observers. As the situation stays more open than ever, it is also obvious that we do not live in the same historical moment. While I was interested in the fact that old political lines were clearly collapsing in Russia, I was also disturbed by the crude imperialism and Jacobinism of the vast majority of the so-called "patriots." Some of them think about nothing but the restoration of the old Russian domination over Eastern and even Central European countries. I tried to explain that they cannot solve the center's problems by dispatching tanks to the Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic States. While I could agree with their refusal to mimic the Western liberal-market model (which is obviously contrary to their traditions (and actually with no chance of being successfully implemented), I disagreed with their concept of Russian identity and Russia's role in the world. Imitation of the past does not seem much better than imitation of the West. It is always imitation and lack of both imagination and understanding of the times. So-called national Bolshevism could have been an interesting phenomenon in the Germany of the 1920s. It is a disastrous anachronism in today's Russian landscape. I am afraid this was not well understood. After I returned to France I discovered that Dugin had launched a magazine called *Elementy*, the content of which seemed to me (I cannot read Russian) a typical mixing of radical influences taken in a confused and uncritical way. I was already displeased by the title of the journal, because I knew it would be used to present it as the Russian counterpart of the French *Éléments*. I wrote Dugin and asked him to remove my name from the board of his journal, where it appeared without my permission (this was done in the next issue). Since then I have not had any contact with Dugin (or with any other group in Russia). I have already explained this several times, most recently in a long letter which was published in 1993 by a German magazine (a French translation of this letter can be found in Taguieffs book, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*).

Schmitt's concept of *Grossraum* can be interpreted in different ways, but I can only condemn its use to legitimate any crude recycling of 19th century imperialism (Russian or otherwise). The problem with "empire" is something else. It is first a matter of European heritage. In the history of Europe, the two main political models have been the empire and the nation-state — France being the most developed example of the latter. My sympathies lie with the first model. Nation-states, whether monarchies or republics, entail enclosures, centralization, a national market, homogenization, destruction of regional languages and cultures, etc. On the other hand, empire always sought to establish an equilibrium between center and periphery, between sameness and diversity, unity and multiplicity. The unity was not so much political or administrative but spiritual. Of course, when I speak about empires I mean the main historical models of the Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, the Hapsburg Empire, the Ottoman Empire, etc. This has nothing to do with 19th century imperialisms, either American or Russian, from Napoleon to

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Hitler, which were only expansionist movements of a particular nation-state. While the nation-state model gave birth to today's world organization (the UN recognizes only states), the empire model certainly comes closest to federalism. It is a matter of semantics. Anyway, it is important to remember that federalism also has historical roots, hence cannot be considered a modern utopia. About a German-Russian alliance, it would certainly be better if Germany and Russia were on good terms rather than at war! That does not mean that Russia and Germany must dominate Europe. Clearly, Europe is in need of a new independent collective security system. This may also prevent regressive nationalist forces from provoking new wars on European soil. For the time being, the dissolution of the bipolar world seems to benefit only little Draculas and multinational corporations.

Telos: A final comment concerning the appeal: it seems ironic that the Parisian intellectual establishment (or at least forty of its most prestigious members) should sign an appeal warning the unaware masses of the danger that you and the New Right allegedly pose precisely at a time when GRECE is developing its most progressive position *vis à vis* immigrants, racism, etc., rather than focusing on the leaders of the National Front who, in fact, are guilty of all the charges made in the appeal (violence, exclusion, etc.). Why have you, along with Taguieff and Yonnet, been targeted, and not e.g., Le Pen or National Front ideologues such as François Brigneau? The appeal itself does not name anyone specifically; the targets were identified subsequently by Roger-Pol Droite in *Le Monde*. What do you make of this? Could it be that the signers of the appeal themselves had no intention of targeting you, Taguieff and Yonnet? If that is so, how can their subsequent silence be explained, once all the arrows began to fly?

Benoist: That is a good question — though it is a bit difficult for me, rather than the people who signed this appeal, to answer it. But you are right: most of the forty signers of the appeal did not have the slightest idea about how it would be used. Except in the original version, which named only Taguieff and was later abandoned, no specific target was mentioned. It was only a vague manifesto against political confusion, violence and extremism. In that form I myself would have signed it. After its publication in *Le Monde* and its instrumentalization through Roger-Pol Droit's article, many of the signers privately expressed their surprise and disapprobation. Why not publicly? Because of fear. Intellectuals today do not have much civil courage, and this could be a first answer to your question. (Incidentally, it is an overstatement to speak of "forty most prestigious members" of the intellectual establishment. While prestige is no proof of competence, only ten or twelve of the signers could be considered "prestigious." Most of them were and remain pretty unknown. One could even say that the more prestigious they were, the more they felt trapped.) Another answer would be that reading the open debates in *Krisis*, with

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people of all opinions participating, was really too much for a little group of McCarthyite sycophants who tried without success to make a fuss about what is normal (intellectual debate) and consider normal what is really scandalous (the absence of debate). Of course, this has to be contextualized within the petty world of the Parisian "intellectual establishment," with its endemic parochial hates, its speculations about "legitimation" and "delegitimation," and its media-oriented strategies. That makes everybody laugh. What is important is not the appeal itself, or the kind of people it was meant to delegitimate (Yonnet after myself, Taguieff after Yonnet, or Pierre Nora, or Olivier Mongin and now even Pierre Vidal-Naquet). From that viewpoint, the appeal is just a tempest in a teapot. It becomes important only as a symptom of the disarray of some members of the New Class and of this intellectual establishment. In a few years, all their models and points of reference have disappeared. They have accumulated mistakes, delusions and frustrations. They are entering a period of transition — a new ideological and political world where references to "fascism" or "communism" are simply obsolete and anachronistic. They are left threatened. They can no longer bear the free circulation of ideas and cannot accept that people coming from different positions could challenge them. They are so ridiculous that they do not see anything more urgent, at a time when people are being killed everyday in what was Yugoslavia, than to attack a journal where most of the contributors come or are from the Left, just because the editor comes from the Right, while they do not do anything against real intolerance, racism and xenophobia. As Taguieff has explained in his book, they dream of a simple world, where everything is clear. That is why they organize witch-hunts in the fashion of the anti-Semites who attribute dangerous powers to Jews no one can see, and why they dream of internal discourses in the same way that anti-Semites speculate about forgeries such as the *Protocols*. But the world changes and they discover that the New Class to which they belong has nothing more to offer. They have even forgotten how to refute an argument, because they believe that trying to refute it makes them accomplices of the position being refuted. They do not know what to say, except to preach intolerance and exclusion, i.e., to launch a call for a thought police. Beyond my particular case, which is unimportant, this is an interesting indication of emptiness — especially if one compares the situation in Paris with that in a country such as Italy, where all debates are possible. Anyway, the appeal was a total bust. Coming from a bunch of fanatics with *Le Monde*'s support (a new *Le Monde*, with none of its old prestige) it came to naught. Most of the prestigious weekly magazines criticized it. More than fifty prestigious personalities expressed their solidarity with Taguieff (the list appeared in *Esprit*). And, of course, *Krisis* continues to publish as many contributions from prestigious Leftists (and non-Leftists) as before. The appeal and the way it was received could very well mark a watershed: the moment when people who chose to debate and those who refused decided to part ways. In that sense, the appeal may have been very useful.

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Telos: Given the kind of account you have provided of the New Right's positions — the rejection of nationalism, distrust of the state, support for federalism, etc. — what remains in the New Right that warrants identifying it with the Right, as the term is usually understood?

Benoist: I cannot answer that unless you provide me with a definition of Right and Left. I have thought about such a definition myself for over fifteen years and I have yet to come up with a satisfactory answer. The meanings of Right and Left have changed over time. They also differ from country to country (the so-called French New Right stands for roughly the very opposite of what has been called the New Right in the US). Moreover, at the same time and place, you have always several Rights and several Lefts, and it is obvious that some of these Rights and some of these Lefts can have more in common than they have with their own group as a whole. In general, people from the Right characterize as typically Left what they dislike, and people from the Left do pretty much the same for the Right. This does not help. If one marks out certain themes in the history of ideas, it quickly becomes clear that over time, they travel from Right to Left and vice-versa. You mention nationalism. But nationalism is much more a framework than a content (it was historically associated with practically all doctrine). You also cite federalism. Yet Proudhon, one of the founders of federalism in France, had disciples on the Right as well as the Left.

Another way to approach the problem would be to speculate on the psychological components of each political group. In that sense, one could probably speak of a rightist and a leftist mind-set — but immediately all sorts of exceptions pop up. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the New Right was an ascribed name, not one chosen by the members themselves. That is why I am so indifferent to these words. I am only interested in the content, and prefer to regard myself both on the Left and the Right. So, your questions can only be answered provisionally. I can identify myself with the Right if by that term is meant the rejection of any theory of progress, the desire to preserve human diversity, or the conviction that the past and the future are dimensions of the present. Psychologically, I can also identify with the Right if that entails the belief that honor is at least as important as dignity, that style is decisive (that the way one does things matters as much as the things themselves), the conviction that today's enemy can become tomorrow's ally (agonality). On the other hand, I am certainly on the Left if that term means the rejection of individualism, the primacy of market-values and destructive competition among people. Goethe said he preferred injustice to disorder. I think injustice is the worst of all disorders. Is this Right or Left?

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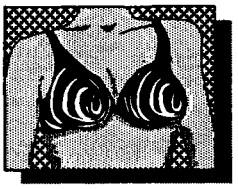
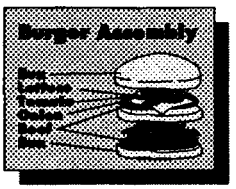
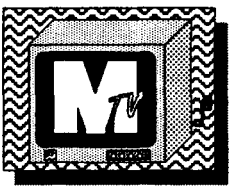
postmodern icons explained







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Notes and Commentary

The New Jews

Aviezer Tucker

"If there had been no Jews, they would have been invented." Today, the nations of the former Soviet bloc are reinventing the traditional ethnic scapegoat role that used to be reserved for the Jews. This time, the Romany (Gypsy) population is forced to play the unenviable role of the "other." The Romanies are far better suited for their newly invented role than the Jews. After the Holocaust, there are more Romanies than Jews in Eastern and Central Europe. It is easy to recognize Romanies, whose ancestors immigrated to Europe from northern India during the late Middle Ages. Romanies do not have a state or influential diaspora to protect them, nor international public opinion to defend them. Politically, the Romanies are unorganized with few or no representatives in government. In addition, like the residents of America's worst ethnic ghettoes, they suffer from the vicious circle of social discrimination, poor education, unemployment, poverty and crime.

The name "Gypsy" originated with an incorrect medieval belief that their origin is Egyptian. The Romanies prefer to be called *Rom*, the word for *Man* in their language. Contrary to common belief, the Romanies are not a homogenous ethnic group. They are composed of several ethnic-linguistic groups as distinct as the English and the English language are from Germans and the German language. The different Romany tribes settled originally in different parts of Europe. The three biggest Romany tribes are the Romanian *Olach* or *Vlax* Romany (the most traditional nomadic group); the Hungarian-Slovak Romanies, and the West -European *Sinti* Romanies whose numbers were decimated by Nazi extermination. Each of these tribes is divided along a professional caste system similar to that of the Indian subcontinent. The major castes consists of musicians, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, horse traders and seasonal workers.

The Romanies' traditional lifestyle combines the pre-modern with the post-modern. The nomadic, unsettled, uprooted, yet artistic and free way of life is at once pre-modern in its inability to adapt to modern industrial society, and post-modern in its disregard of national borders and modern ideologies and value systems. The conflict between a culture combining the pre-modern and the post-modern and a society undergoing a painful process of modernization resembles the conflict between Jewish civilization and Central-East European societies before WWII. As in the case of "the Jewish problem," the state attempted to eliminate it by assimilating the strange, yet alluring, ethnic element.

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But the communists' attempt to assimilate the Romanies failed. Forced settlement caused the creation of Romany urban ghettoes, accompanied by increased racism on the part of the dominant ethnic groups. Communism kept explicit racism dormant. The fall of communism, together with increased economic and social difficulties, has caused an upsurge in anti-Romany racism.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia are good examples for understanding the Romany predicament. The number of Romanies in the Czech Republic is estimated at 300,000, or 3% of the total population. The Slovak Romany population is estimated at half a million, or 10% of the population. The statistics are grim: one quarter of Romany babies die at birth, compared with 1.4% child mortality in the general population. Almost half of Romanies have medical problems; half of them are unemployed, compared with 3% of the general Czech population; and nearly one fifth have criminal records. The Czech Republic has the highest standard of living in the former Soviet bloc. the least unemployment, the most stable democratic government, and the longest liberal tradition. In other words, as bad as things are in the Czech Republic, they are worse in places like Romania or the Ukraine.

After WWII, the Czechoslovak government conducted "ethnic cleansing" of the largely pro-Nazi indigenous German population in the Czech lands. The government settled Romanies from Slovak ghettoes in the emptied houses of the Germans, in north Bohemia, the third district of Prague, and the border area with Germany. This centrally planned and controlled migration was only the first in a series of blunders and atrocities committed by the communist regimes against the Romanies. Communist governments attempted to eliminate Romany identity through the suppression of culture, traditions and language. Romanies were not recognized as a national minority but as a backward socio-ethnic group in need of assimilation. The communist authorities, in a racist policy similar to the eugenics experiments in the American South, attempted to break what they considered a vicious circle of unemployment, welfare dependancy, poverty, high demographic growth and crime through the sterilization of Romany women. Some were sterilized without their knowledge while being hospitalized. Others were pressured to agree, or offered considerable financial incentives by social and health workers, to undergo the operation. Post-communist government officials halted the practice of sterilization without explicit and informed consent. Still, there are reports of continued sterilization of Romany women in Slovakia, where every third birth is of a Romany baby.

The Romanies were able to form, for the first time, their own political union, develop their own culture, and publish magazines in their own languages only during the period of liberalization prior to the 1968 Soviet invasion. By 1973 all these efforts were suppressed by the communists. At the same time, Romanies from across Europe made the first attempts to organize and define their own identity. They also attempted to standardize their dialects to form a single language. In 1972, an international Romany union was

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founded in London. Following the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution, the Romanies were recognized by the government as a national minority with the right to express their identity. Romany literature and magazines started appearing along with attempts to standardize the written Romany dialects. The representatives of a Romany party were elected to the democratic representative bodies. But the effects of centuries of discrimination persist.

Following the split of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic enacted a new citizenship law requiring those not registered as Czechs to apply for Czech citizenship.[1] Since most Romanies were brought to the Czech region from Slovakia, many of them kept declaring their nationality as Slovak, something that did not matter much while there was a Czechoslovakia. Following the split between the Czech Republic and Slovakia, some Czechs would like to deport them "back" across the border. Yet the Slovaks refuse to accept them, claiming they are Czech. In effect, many Czech Romanies are in a civic no-man's-land, rejected by both Czechs and Slovaks.

An applicant for Czech citizenship must prove at least two years of continuous permanent residence and five years without a criminal record. Romanies tend to change their abode more frequently than Czechs, and one fifth of convicted criminals are Romany. During the communist period unemployment was illegal, so many Romanies were convicted of "leading a parasitic life." Some aspects of the Romany lifestyle and values continue to lead them into trouble with the law. The early age of sexual activity conflicts with laws protecting minors from sexual abuse. The international post-modern nature of Romany trade conflicts with obsolete protectionist customs and excise laws of nation-states. Centuries of discrimination in work and housing and the absence of private property among traditional Romany clans has created a Romany tradition of petty theft. Romanies have been subjected to greater police harassment: physical brutality, frequent identity checks, unauthorized house searches and arrests. Romanies claim that often the police force confessions from them for crimes they did not commit. Romanies are also more likely to receive harsher punishments than Czechs and Slovaks convicted of identical crimes. The public perception of Romanies as criminals, encouraged by the media's characterization of the nationality of Romany criminals in their reports, reinforces the discrimination against Romanies in employment and housing, and in effect forces them back into crime.

Another clause in the citizenship law requires proof of mastery of Czech. Many Romanies speak only their language, and even if they know some Czech, they are likely to be illiterate. Thus the citizenship law *de facto* discriminates against Romanies, who become second class non-citizens in their only country.

While traditional Romany ghettoes, settlements on the rims or outside

1. Tom Gross, "Gypsies Deserve Full Citizenship in the Czech Republic," in *The Prague Post* (April 7, 1993), p. 17; Tom Gross and James Hider, "Romanies Feel Law Is Unfair," in *The Prague Post* (January 12, 1994), p. 4.

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villages, persist to a certain extent (though not in the Czech Republic); the communists created new urban ghettoes through central planning. As a part of the communist plan of assimilation, the nomadic way of life was prohibited by law (in Czechoslovakia in 1958). In some cases, communist authorities assigned to Romanies what they considered better housing than the kind of apartments assigned to Czechs and Slovaks. However, these housing arrangements did not conform to the Romanies' lifestyle. Traditional Romany extended families did not fit the predesigned small nuclear family apartments meant for the Czechoslovak family structure. The building design and the assignment of apartments did not consider the Romany caste system, and intertribal, inter-clan rivalries. Consequently, social struggles contributed to the destruction of housing. The Romanies were used to the free life around the camp fire, and did not care for the soulless, grey, prefabricated, high-rising, communist housing, and the apartments fell quickly into disrepair. From a Czech perspective, the Romanies simply "ruined" the much coveted housing given to them.

Now, as the housing market opens up, people are reluctant to rent private housing to Romanies or accept them into neighborhoods. Officials refuse to register them as residents or allot public housing for them. This contributes further to the creation of unhygienic, overcrowded, hopelessly poor Romany ghettoes. In violation of an unenforced law, many businesses (especially privatized pubs, restaurants, discos, cabs, and even movie theatres) do not admit or serve Romanies, claiming that their disrespect for property causes damages and drives away other customers.

Since the Romanies were not recognized as a nation during the communist era, they did not have their own schools. Romany children were forced to attend state schools where they did not understand the language. Attending state schools reinforced the Romany sense of alienation from society. Unable to understand the language or because of disruptive behavior resulting from a different value system, Romany children were sent to special schools created by the communist government for mentally handicapped children — officially to help them catch up with pupils at normal schools. In reality the children never left these special schools and after graduating were excluded from most higher schools, including art and trade schools in which they would have been likely to succeed, considering the traditional Romany artistic and trade castes. Instead, they were offered training in low pay, low status, manual jobs. Today about 40% of special schools students are still Romany.[2]

In some areas, there is *de facto* separation in the schooling system between Romanies and others. But it is not clear whether separate Romany schools help Romany children catch up with state schools or hinder their adaptation to society. One solution favored by some Romany leaders is to have special

2. Tom Gross, "Improving Romany Life Helps All," in *The Prague Post* (August 25, 1993), p. 15.

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pre-school or early school classes for Romany children to teach them the dominant language and culture, to prepare them for later admission to the state school system. Even if accepted, this is still years away from being implemented since there are practically no Romany trained teachers, and in the Czech Republic the number of Czech teachers who know the Romany language are can be counted on the fingers of one hand. There is a program of Romany studies at Prague's Charles University, but it attracts few students.

Employment problems have been exacerbated by the communists' attempts to destroy the traditional Romany caste-trades and use the Romanies as unskilled laborers. Because of their lack of formal education, the Romanies find it difficult to rise above the level of day laborers. Today, despite unenforced anti-discrimination laws, many employers, private and public, discriminate against Romany job applicants. Some specify in their ads that Romanies are not wanted. The restructuring of the Czech economy, despite the creation of some Romany-owned businesses, hurts them more than most: as unskilled laborers, they are the first to be laid off, while the increased sophistication of Czech businesses requires less unskilled labor.[3]

Welfare benefits available to Czechs are also available to Romanies. As everywhere else in the former Soviet bloc, however, free market reforms are eroding these benefits. A particular problem in the Czech Republic now concerns the newly introduced privatized health insurance. Mr. Goral, a member of the government committee on the Romany issue, promised that the Ministry of Health will look for ways to provide medical insurance to Romanies who do not work or pay for medical insurance by finding in each district a doctor who would care for them. Yet with small budgets, the governments of the former Soviet bloc can do little for their less well-off citizens.

In a period of increased freedom and economic reforms, some of those less fortunate and adaptable among the general population are subjected to a greater temptation to blame the Romanies for their woes, to increased anti-Romany racism. The unemployed and those who feel threatened by reform and modernization vent their frustrations and anger against the most visible and weak ethnic minority. Some of those whose socio-economic status is eroding, or who fear such an erosion, accuse the Romanies of abusing the welfare system. Each former Soviet bloc country has its own explicit manifestation of anti-Romany political racism. In the Czech Republic, the far Right Czech Republican Party carries the banner of racism. With 6% of the Czech National Council, it is a negligible, though noisy minority. Still, in the major cities of North Bohemia, where there is a large Romany population and a considerable communist heritage of environmental destruction and industrial decay, the party received between 10-17% of the vote. Miroslav Sladek, the populist leader of the Republicans, delivers inflammatory speeches, promising

3. Marta Tulejova, "Romany Rights and Wrongs," in *The Prague Post* (September 8, 1993), p. 17.

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to fight burgeoning crime by deporting the large Romany minority in those towns "back to Slovakia." Sladek makes headlines through "gimmicks" like offering an Alfa Romeo car as a "prize" to the town that deports the most Romanies. Less institutionalized, politically unorganized skinheads numbering in the hundreds conduct violent demonstrations shouting "Gypsies to the gas chambers" and attacking innocent Romanies. Czech authorities claim it is difficult to crack down on skinheads because they are loosely organized and cannot be held collectively responsible.

Anti-Romany racism is not restricted to fringe groups. In a recent "Miss Czech Republic and Slovakia beauty pageant" carried live on television, one of the contestants, a 17 year-old from North Bohemia, answered during the interview stage of the contest a question concerning her professional aspirations: "I do not like criminal elements, especially those with dark skin, and I would like to cleanse my city of them. Therefore I want to become a lawyer." The interviewer neither stopped the North Bohemian "beauty" nor protested. He said: "You seem to be a brave girl. We need that sort of a lawyer." The audience laughed, and some even clapped. The public and media outcry that followed brought into the open the problem of anti-Romany racism. A recent poll discovered that most Czechs have negative attitudes toward Romanies. In Slovak, the verb "to Gypsy" means "to lie," and similar racist phrases exist in both Czech and Slovak.[4]

The politically unorganized Romany minorities in the former Soviet bloc lack political clout. In response to Romany demands for protection, politicians are reluctant to act for fear of appearing "Gypsy-lovers." In a letter to the Romany Democratic Congress, Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus did not accept government responsibility for most of the grievances of the Romanies. The Czech Prime Minister also refused to relax the residency laws to allow family migration of Slovak Romanies. In his opinion responsibility lies with local district and city authorities, the very same authorities that already discriminate against the Romanies through their residency laws. The Prime Minister has announced the creation of a committee of "interdepartmental specialists" to study and offer solutions for the social problems that underlie the problem of racism: unemployment, housing, illegal immigration from the East, crime, etc.[5] Bu while there is a law against racism, it generally remains unenforced.

When compared with the American civil rights experience, several differences highlight the reasons for the desperation of the Romany predicament. Unlike the American civil rights movements, and despite the existence of Romany

4. Shailagh Murray, "Beauty and the Beast of Racism," in *The Prague Post* (April 14, 1993) p. 1; Caroline Srstik, "Meciar Slammed for Ethnic Slurs," in *The Prague Post* (September 15, 1993), p. 1.

5. Lorrayne Anthony, "Local Bigotry Opens Door to Skinhead Fury," in *The Prague Post* (March 30, 1994), p. 9.

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political parties, they are politically unorganized and with few allies in the *Gaje* (Romany word for non-Romanies, like "Gentiles" for Jews) community. Unlike the American civil rights movement, the Romanies find it hard to use the central government to enforce civil rights and anti-discrimination laws. The central government is reluctant to appear as a "Gypsy-lover" and lose popularity with the anti-Romany vote. The Romanies try to use the Supreme Court to enforce anti-discrimination laws, but the status and responsibilities of the judicial authorities in the former Soviet bloc still suffer from lack of independence and subservience to an executive branch that does not necessarily respect the law. The responsibilities of the Supreme Court in the new Czech Republic are still unclear, though surely not as wide as in the US. The number of pending cases before the court has created a large backlog, thus reducing further the court's effectiveness.

One exception in the Czech context is President Vaclav Havel, who has been calling continuously for an end to discrimination against Romanies. He even compared the discrimination of Romanies to the behavior of ordinary Czechoslovaks toward Jews during the Nazi occupation. Still, as a symbolic president, Havel can do little more than preach to his fellow citizens.

Since the political and economic will and means for ending segregation and discrimination do not exist, the Romany situation is likely to deteriorate even further under conditions of increasingly privatized and competitive economies. The less competitive members of society such as the Romanies are likely to suffer more and have fewer social safety networks. The large demographic growth among the Romany population, their poverty and lack of education, insure that their socio-economic problems will increase.[6] The Romany issue is likely to become the greatest social problem of the region for years to come.

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6. Julianne Slovak. "Home, Deathly Home," in *The Prague Post* (June 2, 1993), p. 1.

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On Italy

Sergio Benvenuto

A recently published book reports the results of a 1990 study on "values" in EC countries.[1] Of particular interest is the comparison of the Italian and the European data. Among all Europeans (with the possible exception of the Irish), Italians rate as the most conservative and least "modern" on many issues: the importance of family and religion; belief in God; the value of marriage; the role of women; abortion, etc. Italy is even more traditional than Greece or Spain and Portugal. It may seem paradoxical that such a country could have lived through the recent upheaval which brought down its First Republic. But this will come as no surprise to people such as Carlo Tullio Altan, who has been claiming this for some time. It will, however, surprise those intellectuals who were struck by the fact that Italy had the largest Communist Party in the West (until 1989, when it became the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra*), the most violent terrorism in the late 1970s, at one time the world's most active feminist movement, and some of the most libertarian and radical state reforms. They were under the illusion that Italy was in the avant garde of the West: the most rebellious and therefore most modern country. Félix Guattari wrote: "When Italy sneezes, Europe has a cold." Exactly the opposite is the case: when Europe sneezes, Italy catches the flu.

Communism, trendy leftism and bloody terrorism were the other side of a blocked democracy — a conservative country at a standstill. Political and cultural radicalism was the byproduct of backwardness (even in cultural matters). Since 1948, Italy had been run by a Christian Democratic Party supported by the Catholic Church. In 1962, the Christian Democrats entered into a coalition with the Socialist Party — an arrangment which lasted until March 1994. Except for this, there were no significant changes in power relations among Italian parties until a year-and-a-half ago, when the entire political system was shattered. Today the parties that governed Italy for decades are practically defunct. To understand both this stasis and how it precipitated the recent upheaval, it is necessary to point out some Italian peculiarities.

All European or American capitals have a large number of restaurants offering every imaginable ethnic cuisine — except Milan or Rome, where ethnic

1. Renzo Gubert, ed., *Persistenze e Mutamenti dei Valori degli Italiani nel Contesto Europeo* (Rome: Reverdito Edizioni, 1993).

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restaurants are few and far between, frequented primarily by the snobbish élite. Italians eat Italian food, even according to regional traditions. Italians drink Italian wines, mineral water, and bitters (*amari*); they wear Italian clothes; live in Italian-designed houses; worship the most Italian of Gods: all Roman popes (until John Paul II), for four centuries had been Italian. Italians even pack along their Moka coffeemaker and *Lavazza* coffee when travelling. Young Italians might listen to nothing but Anglo-American music, but as they get older they come back to the traditional popular Italian music.

All films in Italy are dubbed, so all foreigners seem to speak perfect Italian — be it Brigitte Bardot, Perry Mason or Woody Allen. Attempts to introduce films with subtitles have failed. The result is that foreign languages are spoken by few. European intellectuals from multi-lingual countries are taken aback by Italian professors who speak only Italian. (The Chair of the English Department of an important Italian university confided that over half the students graduating in English Language and Literature do not speak English). Non-Italians are surprised, when inquiring if an Italian speaks a certain language, to be told "No, I do not . . . I studied it at school." Studying a language in school guarantees the inability to speak it. After all, Italian is not like English, Spanish, French or Arabic: it is a regional language confined only to a narrow peninsula. But Italians are as attached to it as they are to their wines and cheese, to medieval festivals (such as the Palio in Siena, or the Madonna dell'Arco in Naples), to local songs and to the Pope.

Italy is the only Western country where over 65% of the population live in privately owned homes. When an Italian head of a household buys a house, it is in the belief that it will remain in the family for generations. Italy may have produced many famous navigators, but the base of the country is stable and sedentary. In its conservatism Italy is probably more similar to Japan than to any other Western country, which may also explain the "Japanese-style" economic boom of the 1950's and 1960's.

There are few divorces and even fewer children (Italy has the lowest birth rate in the world) and these few are very attached to their parents. Despite this, along with their German and Swiss counterparts, Italians are the European youth most inclined to abuse hard drugs. Their mothers not only nurture them, but also provide them with spending money with which they buy drugs. While in the US it is common for the youth to move out on their own very early, in Italy they remain at home until they are 30 more. This is also one of the deeper psychological reasons why there is still a military draft (only for males). Drafted armies are doomed to defeat, yet the draft seems to be the only way to free young males from their maternal skirts.

Unlike the Americans and the French, after WWII Italians stopped indulging in parades and patriotic fanfare. Two decades of fascism were a long-term vaccination against any form of explicit nationalistic enthusiasm. Only during international soccer matches do fans exhibit the national colors. Berlusconi saw

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this and named his party after the soccer slogan, "*Forza Italia*" ("Go Italy!"). But this lack of patriotism does not mean that Italians are less narcissistic. At any rate, whatever Italian nationalism remains, it has to do with society and not with the state; i.e., the *Italian way of life* — what Gramsci (the only 20th century Italian philosopher read abroad) theorized as the "national-popular culture." Italians complain endlessly about Italy (social satire is a preferred genre in the theater and the cinema). But within this often ruthless self-criticism lurks a self-infatuation. Everyone has heard the joke about Europeans. "What is paradise?" Answer: "A country where the cook is French, the businessman German, the policeman English, the administrator Swiss, and the lover Italian." And "What is hell?" Answer: "A country where the cook is English, the businessman French, the policeman German, the lover Swiss, and the administrator Italian." As with all commonplaces, this one also has a kernel of truth: Italy is a country of magnificent lovers and terrible administrators. Because making love is a private matter involving primarily one's own body, there is a celebration of one's self-image. But being a good administrator involves forgetting one's self-image. It is not a matter of self-love, but of love for work and public duty. This interest in others is most difficult for Italians, which explains in part Berlusconi's political success: he seduced Italians with the media, without providing any evidence of being able to develop a good state administration.

Gore Vidal, who knows Italy well, characterized the "Italian case" with a remark worth countless sociological treatises: "Americans invented the separation of church and state; Italians invented the separation of state and citizen." Italians are often unaware of the extent to which this distance between state and citizen constitutes a perennial weakness. People are unaware of it because the state appears as an obtuse and cynical despot, eliciting rage and revenge, but certainly not pity. Following Pasolini, the government and the political élite are referred to as "the Palace" (*il Palazzo*). The state is more like Kafka's Castle — distant, impenetrable, capricious and aloof from its citizens. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the latest elections all the major parties had "less state" as their slogan.

For decades the Italian state has been unable to collect taxes from anyone but its employees — and in this case only because their taxes are taken out of their paychecks beforehand. It is easy for the self-employed to find ways to evade taxes. As a result, short of revenues, the state systematically imposes further taxes or raises those that already exist. But in reality, only employees pay them. It is an endless spiral. Failing to squeese taxes from tax evaders, the state increasingly squeezes them from those who have already paid. Employees, seeing their paychecks thus reduced to peanuts, usually find a second, freelance job on which they pay no taxes. But in taking on a second job, they neglect their primary one, hence the inefficiency and chaos of state-owned agencies, necessitating the kind of privatization prevalent everywhere in the West.

It is common knowledge that the state can redistribute wealth through fiscal policies, which explains the citizens' interest in the fiscal implications of political

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proposals. For Americans, *true citizens* are those who contribute: only they have the right to tell politicians how they can spend their money. For Italians, the contributor is the poor fool who was unable to avoid the state's ax. As a result state deficits have always been astronomical. It should not be surprising, therefore, that Berlusconi won the election by breaking with precedents and discussing taxes, even if only in a rather superficial way by suggesting that they ought to be cut.

When the Italian state invests in social services, it is investing the revenues of those who earn the least. The epithet "tax and spend" which Americans ascribe to liberals is not applicable to the Italian Left, which can spend but not tax — at least not without undertaking radical fiscal reforms. Up to now Italy's Left (more a religious than a political affiliation with a clear program) has been losing because it lacked the means for redistributing wealth: a system able to collect taxes from the rich. This explains the failure of Italian health policies, modeled after Sweden: in order to ensure free medical assistance for everyone, the state overtaxes workers, not entrepreneurs.

The Italian state's inefficiency makes it seem despotic, although its high administrators are not necessarily so. This has not always been the case. Unified in 1861, until the advent of fascism Italy was led by a *liberal* (not in the American sense) political class — conservative but honest, strongly anti-clerical and anti-socialist, with a sense of loyalty toward the state. After the 1920s the state was remodeled by the historical convergence of three ideologies: fascist nationalism, Catholic welfare, and socialist statism, all of which promoted an enormous charitable state, which led many to think Italy was the most socialist of all NATO countries. The Castle managed the economy through a so-called Ministry of State Participations — a sort of Super-Entrepreneur which was, in fact, *the* largest European entrepreneur. For decades the Italian state has managed (poorly, or worse) utilities, airlines, trains, hospitals and health clinics, radio and television, the postal system, highways, telephones, schools, the sale of salt and tobacco, and even in part the movie industry, which is why the Italian system has often been referred to as "state social-capitalism."

This enormous state power has been administered by a Catholic-style vocation for welfare (what Catholics call *solidarism*). State industries and services were run with the philanthropic spirit of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, rather than the efficiency of British Telecom. This charitableness was then creatively melded with corruption (even the old anti-fascists recognize that fascist Italy was far less corrupt than 1980s Italy). Given the distance and inscrutability of the state-Castle, Italians require "mediation" to access the services that only state corporations (*gli enti*) can mete out. Heidegger would have been amused with this term, *Enti* or *Beings* which harks back to Greek philosophy. With respect to the closed ontology of these *Beings*, the solitary citizen finds himself weighed down by an abstract and formal state machine. Whereas some countries have counselors or social workers to help people in negotiating matters with the state, in Italy there are (or better, there were) politicians.

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This isolation from the people, it is argued, caused the political class to fall. But this is nonsense. The political class, which was essentially vanquished in the last election, erred with excessive charity, which is why it was voted in by a large margin for over 40 years. This political class today is paying the price of its excessive involvement in the lives of its people through *clientelism*. In fact, it is contradictory to accuse politicians of distancing themselves from the people while at the same time calling them *clientelari*, i.e., "people dealing with 'clients'." In the Middle Ages, having a *saint in heaven* was essential. Nowdays the saint is a political friend in the Castle. In Catholic theology saints acted as mediators between the living and the divine. Today's "saints" in Italy mediate between the forlorn land-surveyors (to use again a Kafka metaphor) and the Supreme Being (the state). This is most evident in the South, where clientelism and votes-for-sale are the norm ("I'll get you 20 votes, if you do me this favor"), which is why it is so difficult to accomplish anything — whether finding a job or simply obtaining a legal document promptly, installing a telephone, receiving one's pension, securing a business licence, etc. For example, recently it has become necessary to obtain an "anti-Mafia certificate" as a pre-condition for working with a state "Being," which means filling out a form stating that one is not a Mafia assassin, and signing it before a city official, who stamps it. This silly rite in Rome involves only a few minutes, while in Naples obtaining the same certificate takes over a month (unless, of course, one "greases the proper wheels").

This difficulty in the South is a result of widespread corruption among government officials, who profit from state inefficiency. There it is necessary to pay for services allegedly freely provided. To avoid both public extortion and inefficiency, citizens (especially if they live south of Rome) have but one recourse: charity, either political or priestly. They must be *recommended*. One's "heavenly saint" — to whom one pledges loyalty and votes — makes a "*recommendation*." Say, for example, one wants the job of garbage collector and there are three openings with 3000 people applying for it. One's protector will fight tooth and nail, using whatever means necessary against political adversaries, who obviously are doing exactly the same. In this sense, Italian corruption is predicated on the philanthropy necessary to help Kafka's land-surveyor penetrate the Castle.

After decades of wrestling among themselves, rival politicians finally decided it was less costly to come to some kind of accord. So they decided to allot posts without squabbling ("one garbage collector post to the Christian Democrats, one to the Socialists, one to the opposition"). This "gentlemen's agreement" among philanthropists resulted in "allotments" (*lottizzazione*), meaning that all jobs in public "Beings" (but even private, now) were divided among parties, who alloted them to their vassals within their electoral army. This helps explain why all Italian political forces have been *de facto* "socialist": it is easier to "make allotments" (*lottizzare*) within a public entity than within a dynamic private industry. In fact, the inefficiency of the oppressive state is a function of

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the efficiency of the jobs-allotment system.

Especially in the South, Italian politicians were veritable humanitarians. In order to satisfy the contradictory desires of their electoral vassals, however, they needed money to invest in the "capillary system" of allotments. As elsewhere in the West, politicians need an ever-increasing cashflow to do good, and this cashflow has two sources: banks and industry. Consequently, the politicians (particularly those in government) gradually appropriated the banks — easy enough since in Italy large banks are mostly public. In the US, banks are powerful because allegedly they have politicians and parties in their backpockets. In Italy, the opposite is the case: politicians and parties had the banks in their backpockets. By controlling credit institutions, politicians controlled the financing of agencies: Italian parties became national finance capitalists. (As a rule, Italian banks risk nothing because their profits derive solely from interest on loans, not from risky financial undertakings.) Because of this political "colonization," some banks (such as the Banco Ambrosiano) undertook risky operations linked to the Mafia and, consequently, went bankrupt. The financiers involved were often killed (their bodies found under London bridges, poisoned in prison), or they committed suicide. In short, politicians and mafiosi introduced an element of capitalist risk into a banking system still resembling pawnbroking.

It is no accident that Italy has an "asphyxiated" stock market. When all is said and done, stocks are a way of democratizing capitalism, with industry financed by a myriad of savers. In Italy, most financing is done through banks, behind which lurk political parties. By controlling the financial sources, the latter perfected the system known as *tangenti* (literally, pay-offs). Because politicians are often public administrators and occasionally even in charge of public works, they are accustomed to dealing with entrepreneurs: "I'll get you the contract if you kick back to me or my party (or both) a percentage of your profit." The result was that contracts for public works were rarely awarded to the best or lowest bid, but rather to those most predisposed to pay *tangenti* to the aforementioned "saints." The results are now clear, especially in the South.

Some of this takes place in almost all industrialized countries, since all parties and politicians try to manipulate laws limiting financing. Why, then, only in Italy — and in Japan — has this illegal system been systematically exposed, resulting in the collapse of the entire political system? Perhaps in Italy, as in Japan, the level of corruption reached intolerable levels. Or perhaps Italian magistrates are just better than their French, American or German counterparts. In any case, this system called *Tangentopoli* ("Bribe City") destroyed the entrepreneurial spirit. Entrepreneurs found it ever more convenient to invest their time cultivating useful contacts with Roman politicians than in winning markets by running around Frankfurt or London. Today, public opinion is fed up with corrupt politicians, although less so with entrepreneurs, who are no less corrupt. Thus in the latest election voters overwhelmingly supported Silvio Berlusconi, an entrepreneur. Even the most ignorant voters were aware that Berlusconi was a master at maneuvering among politicians, thereby gaining the

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unconditional support of the Socialist Party. In fact, industry was perfectly adjusted to this system, founded on the intermingling of politics and finance. The results of this system became clear when some large Italian firms attempted financial dealings abroad, only to return home with their tails between their legs. Fiat itself could not acquire the French mineral water company, Perrier.

Italian capitalism is still dominated by a "few great families," with their financial agencies concentrated in Mediobanca. They have always had close ties to political power, and they are mistrusted by small entrepreneurs. Berlusconi and the Northern League rallied the small entrepreneurs of the North by attacking Confindustria, the leading association of Italian industrialists ruled by the "few great families." The Left did not attack Confindustria. Rather, it tried to "seduce" it: this is one of the reasons for its defeat.

Despite protests to the contrary, in Italy there has been a failure of democracy. Some democracies thrive, while others (such as the Weimar Republic, the Fourth French Republic, or Italy's pre-Fascist government) close shop. Umberto Eco stated the obvious: "Why get upset with the old politicians, when they have been elected and re-elected for decades with landslide victories?" It is not that Italians suddenly realized that most of their politicians — often even the opposition — were corrupt. They all knew this; rumors about politicians had been circulating for years. The point is that Italian politicians were so corrupt because the populace was even more corrupt. It is the admission of the democratic bankruptcy of a people.

Italy lives in illegality. Italians do not respect red lights or parking restrictions. Italians systematically evade taxes, miss work, have more illegal outside jobs, collect pensions by faking disability, and continually make false insurance claims; many are involved in contraband, cheating and fraud. This lack of civility becomes paroxysmal in cities like Rome, Naples and Palermo, but characterizes the "national genius." It is only natural that a people committed to illegality prefer governance by like-minded politicians.

Politicians such as Mario Segni did not blame the people but the electoral system. There is some truth to this, which is why, when it came to carrying out electoral reforms, the electoral system they chose was the Anglo-American — the one most reminiscent of a sporting event, with one loser and one winner. Thus the recent election was the most passionate and aggressive since 1948: the electoral campaign brought out the same excitement as a soccer match. Berlusconi took advantage of this, with his soccer team as the champion of the Italian League.

Italy used to have a proportional system, as in Belgium and in the Netherlands: the number of deputies reflected the actual percentage of votes a party received. This system may work in other countries, but in Italy it produced a myriad of parties with no single one obtaining a clear victory over the others — a system which produced instability in governments, but considerable stability in the system itself. Leaders, more than others, were rewarded to the extent that they succeeded in weaving, like Penelope, a web of compromises, alliances,

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concessions and barters. Andreotti was the (even physical) paradigm of a system founded on complex coalitions of heterogeneous parties: a man for all seasons, a consummate Machiavelli of mediation. For the rest, *trasformismo*, the ability to "change hats," and *piccolo cabottaggio*, coasting along the path of least resistance, are by now a characteristic of the Italian political class. There may have been far-sighted and honest politicians, but the electorate does not seem to have ever rewarded them.

The rules of the game *are* fundamental, and they condition its outcome. Similarly, the political class is an expression of the moral character of the people who chose it. In the last election Berlusconi understood the essence of the majority electoral system. He saw that "American-style democracy" leads to a lower level of political rhetoric. While his adversaries continued to articulate a refined language of politics (which worked in the proportional system, founded as it was on complex equilibria and mediations), Berlusconi understood the need for basic yet effective, slogans that the people could understand: "We'll lower taxes!" or "We'll create a million new jobs!" It is not that the people preferred Berlusconi's promises to those of the others: what they preferred was politicians who made promises, unlike those who did not.

Perhaps Italy's democracy deficit is nothing but the ostentatious, theatrical form of the crisis of democracy in the West, for which the bad reputation of politicians is but a warning light: the profession most disdained by people is that composed of persons whom they themselves elect. Italians are not interested in the private and sexual life of politicians — even the most powerful fall only when implicated in financial scandals. In Anglo-American countries, politicians are booted out for being gay, having adulterous relations with young women, or illegally employing a maid, whereas in Italy everyone knows that some ministers — one time even a Prime Minister — are gay. Yet neither political adversaries nor journalists take advantage of such "weaknesses." Italians ostracize politicians only if they steal on the job — Italians forgive everything, except being cheated, in which case their self-esteem is deeply wounded.

Unlike other Western countries, the Italian creative elite is as removed from the people as the state. Great Italian writers, scientists and artists are more an expression of themselves or their circle than of average Italians. As usual, to really understand this phenomenon it is necessary to look at the South, especially to Naples. If Italy is the mirror of Europe, *mutatis mutandis* Naples is the distorted mirror of Italy. As in amusement park mirrors, it magnifies the vices and virtues of the original. Naples has a great intellectual tradition, a sophisticated cultural elite and is home to one of the first institutes for philosophical studies in Europe. Yet all of this is immersed in a metropolis with the highest level of criminality, illiteracy, poverty, urban decay, unemployment, infant mortality, etc. Italians detest this Southern capital, because Naples is but a reflection of Italy itself. For decades there was a cultural center in Naples which called itself *Atollo* (atoll). The distant Italian state/Castle faces an atoll of an intelligentsia which has no impact on the rest of the citizens. The intellectuals'

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writings are baroque, convoluted, self-pleasing, and pompous. Italy has modernized, but this is due to television and popular journalists, not the cultural elite. A television singer/preacher such as Adriano Celentano has contributed more to the secularization of Italians than philosophers such as Benedetto Croce or Norberto Bobbio. Unlike most of the world, where journalists write *on* philosophy and *on* Nobel Prize winners, in Italy philosophers and Nobel Prize winners themselves write for newspapers. The problem, however, is that Italian newspapers are the least read in Europe.

This intellectual atoll is the result of the school system. In the US high schools teach practically nothing, while colleges rate among the best in the world. In Italy, the *liceo classico* (elite high school) — planned by Giovanni Gentile, the only true educational reformer in Italy in this century — is adequate. Italian universities are in ruins. Newspapers never mention it (since university professors write for newspapers), but the situation in universities and in research is analogous to that in politics. Since they do not elect them, the people trust professors. Even in higher education, careers are made not by writing great works or carrying out original research, but by having the protection of a powerful academic *barone* ("baron" is the academic version of the "heavenly saint"), who allots university positions. When a young man asked how to launch his university career, he was told: "learn how to drive," because the baron's chauffeur will sooner or later win a university or CNR (the state research's Being) competition. Actually, those who make a career are commonly called not chauffeurs but "bag carriers" (*portaborse*). In the university or in politics, the future belongs to the *portaborse*. Italians are proud of their Nobel Prize winners in the sciences, such as Fermi, Levi Montalcini or Rubbia. But most of these scientists made it only because they worked abroad. As a rule, leading Italian scholars leave the country to go to work elsewhere.

Studies show that people regard the *carabinieri* as the most prestigious state institution (despite the fact that they are the butt of well-known jokes depicting them as bumbling idiots). They are the most admired state employees. The least prestigious group consists of politicians. As a rule in Italy, the more the people control an institution, the less they respect it — thereby betraying their own mistrust of themselves. Not surprisingly, a non-parliamentarian, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, was chosen to govern Italy during the transition from the First to the Second Republic. As it turned out, he governed better than any democratically elected politician. But not one newspaper pointed out that this choice reflected the Italians' democratic immaturity. Today the most cherished public figure in Italy is Antonio Di Pietro, a judge and the "hero" who has exposed political corruption in Milan. This may have to do with the fact that in Italy judges are not elected by the people but chosen by their professional association/guild. By now Italians trust only the old professional "guilds," which are beyond public scrutiny: the Catholic Church, the magistrature, university professors, and the *carabinieri*/police.

The Revolution brought about two changes, the *Lega Nord* (Northern

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League) and "Berlusconism." For years, typical Northern protest votes went to the Communist Party, then later to the Northern League, until Berlusconi intercepted part of them. Before it won considerable support in the latest elections, some saw the Northern League as a sane rejection of the old political system, and thought it should be encouraged; while others called it a provincial, racist, "Balkanian" separatist ideology which should be fought at all costs. The truth is that the old Italian political mentality tends to filter all political phenomena according to old definitions, and above all in terms of the eternal Left/Right axis. But today's conflicts can no longer be understood according to such a paradigm. The League has been called "populist," but unlike some earlier expressions of "populism" it is open to Europeanism and appeals to a well-to-do upper class. Thus it escapes any traditional definitions.

The League is considered a conservative movement because it is against "statism" and in favor of a free market. The situation is much more complicated, since in Italy the Right tradition has often been against a free market. The Christian Democratic regime — given its charitable, paternalistic and corrupted calling — always promoted state initiatives, and strengthened those projects which had been the pride of fascism — ENI (the National Oil Company), IRI (the state Italian Reconstruction Industry), the state telecommunications monopoly and the public transport industry. This is why there is even a kind of "liberal Thatcherism" within the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), given that the Italian ruling regime has always displayed a certain welfarism (the *stato-provvidenza* — providential state, being a sort of secularized reincarnation of divine Christian providence), rather than a *laissez-faire* attitude allowing the free play of pure market forces.

The rise of a Northern League did not result in the creation of a parallel Southern League, but in the revitalization of the neo-fascist, strongly anti-federalist party, the National Alliance (AN). Southerners realize that without the rich industrial North they are lost. The South has always been statist because the Southern "heavenly saints" have always managed to channel resources there. Why, then, did the South not react to separatism and free-trade politics by turning to the Left? The answer reveals some psychological phantoms. By denying the symbolic value of Italian unification, the League defamed the sacred values of the Risorgimento (the *epos* of Italian unification) and the cult of Garibaldi instilled since infancy. By breaking these taboos, the North is seen as subversive and the South reacts along similar lines with a subversive vote.

League supporters think more or less as follows: "We represent a rich and productive Italy, more European (with more affinity with Hamburg than with Naples or Palermo), and less encumbered by the old parties' web of power. Traditional politicians, whether governing or of the opposition, bought the *terroni* (a derogatory designation of Southern Italians) with welfare politics, by squandering our money through *sotto-governo* donations to buy the poor Southern votes. But we no longer have to throw our money into this bottomless pit. If the South wants to stay with us, then they should do what we do — roll up their

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sleeves, get to work, and break with the Mafia, both local and political. If they refuse, we will break with them and leave them to their Levantine destiny. As a productive North, we are against socialist 'statism' and in favor of a dynamic capitalism with minimal state interference."

All parties agreed on investing resources to modernize the South. It is not an accident that, over the past 15 years, the governing parties consistently won Southern votes, while their proportions in the North diminished. Forty-five years of politicking for the emancipation of the South has produced meager, if not discouraging, results. An organized underworld (i.e., the *camorra* and the Mafia) has battled the state head-on for some time now — and is still powerful. Discrepancies in income and unemployment between North and South are widening. One needs only consult regional EC statistics concerning *pro capita* income: Italy is the only European country whose regions rate among both the top (i.e., Lombardy and the Veneto) and bottom ten. In short, Italy is the EC country with the strongest regional disparities.

A different viewpoint is emerging in Europe, focusing on regions more than on nation-states. In fact, European well-being is usually a function of the distance from the "economic heart," whose axis runs from Stockholm to Milan, touching Denmark, Western Germany, Eastern France, and Switzerland. Well-being decreases in relation to the distance from this economic axis: London, Paris, Vienna and the Veneto are rich; Scotland, Ireland, Portugal, Greece, and Southern Italy are poor. The League, therefore, deploys an impeccable economic logic: Milan and Turin are as close to Frankfurt, Amsterdam and Lyon as Catania, Athens, Seville and Lisbon are far. Spain, Belgium, Great Britain and Germany have regional problems every bit as serious as those of Italy. But today the problem in major European countries is how to contain immigration from the Third World and Eastern Europe. France and Germany, the two steering countries of the EC, are both closing their borders. In Italy, however, there has been only a relatively low and rather recent immigration, which is why regional problems appear more pressing. Italians have yet to confront what will be one of the greatest problems of the next century: growing ethnic and religious conflict. Italians are essentially one ethnic people with one religion, protected by a careless provincialism — a blessed condition which isolates Italy from the great modern tragedy. Lacking true aliens, Italians alienate North and South. For now, immigrants in Italy sell flowers in restaurants, wash windshields at stop-lights, and work as maids, prostitutes or house-painters. In a few years, when all these people begin competing with Italian workers, businessmen and state employees, the situation may change.

Berlusconi succeeded where Ross Perot failed: he seized on the prestige of a self-made man and a general hostility to professional politicians. Above all, he understood what the Left did not: that modern "American-style" democracy increasingly resembles the market. To sell a political product, one must first understand what the people want or would buy if it were available. Before launching his campaign, Berlusconi undertook painstaking market research,

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and in the end chose a product he thought would sell. The Left offered the same product it had been marketing for 50 years. Of course, it did change, but those changes, or resistance to change, were based on internal processes, and not on accomodating people's tastes.

In this sense "Berlusconism" shows how politics, like the market, has been trivialized. Nothing today — whether religion, art, politics, ideology or education — is independent of the market. They are all products like any other, which win through competition. It is a commonplace to say that Berlusconi won because he controlled the media. Others have advanced themselves without the media: witness the growth of the League, or Segni's referendum movement. Politicians of the old regime have been discredited, even though they had the most control of the media. Berlusconi won not only because of his own television coverage, but also because he knew how to use it. RAI (the state radio and television networks) mounted a strong anti-Berlusconi campaign. Yet anti-Berlusconi politicians never succeeded in utilizing RAI as Berlusconi succeeded in using his own stations.

On a gut level Berlusconi is not linked to any particular ideology. He is no great visionary, but a tycoon who pursues power in and of itself. He is not interested in participating, but in winning. To do so at this stage he had to align himself with the neo-fascists and the League, but both are uncomfortable alliances, incompatible even among themselves, and he will seek to free himself from them as soon as possible. If a clear shift to the Left would assure him a political future, he would not hesitate to make the move. His own party is a mere instrument of his own personal power.

In a market democracy, the only way to redimension one's adversaries is to let them win. Only by allowing Berlusconi and his allies to govern will it be possible to demystify their claims of being able to solve problems. No single political figure has the magic wand with which to solve the problems of a complex society. Solving one problem creates others. Hence the inexorable disenchantment with politics in general: changing governments makes one aware that political will has very little to do with social reality. It is not an accident that the Communist Party (there is still one in Italy) seems to do everything in its power to lose elections: perhaps this is born of an unconscious awareness that having power would destroy the spell of the great hope. Only an eternal opposition can believe in Politics, with a capital P. Generally those who live in an established democracy should know that, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

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Strategy or Identity? The Northern League at a Crossroad: Two Interviews with Bossi and Rocchetta

Damian Tambini

Like movements such as Vlaamsblock in Belgium and the National Front in France, the Northern League in Italy deployed an ethno-territorial identity to motivate and organize its supporters. Also like Vlaamsblock, it demanded the fiscal autonomy of Northern regions from the Southern ones, and a federal constitution to replace the unitary one. As the League becomes more involved in governing Italy, however, the movement has to decide if its goals are genuinely federalist, or if the rhetoric of autonomism was merely a strategy to gain power. Interviews with two League leaders reveal internal disagreement on these matters.

Lombardness and the Making of the Movement

It is not difficult to find League people in the Italian Parliament these days. There are a lot of them: 116 since the March 1994 elections.[1] They are also easy to spot. Many still wear a small pin showing a medieval warrior clad in chainmail, holding his sword high. This is Alberto da Giussano, the hero of a battle fought at Legnano, near Milan, in 1167.

A strange hero for a party claiming to be a modernizng revolutionary force, hoping to create a federated Italy within a new Europe. The new Minister of Interior, the League's Roberto Maroni, seems to think so. Since the League assumed government responsibilities in May 1994, he seems reluctant to wear his pin. The same goes for the new *Presidente della Camera*, Irene Pivetti, who rarely adorns her Thatcherite blouse with the pin-on medieval soldier. Once a rallying point for the League, it seems that the Legnano warrior is being laid to rest once again — along with the rest of the Leagues' symbolic clatter. To a certain extent this is to be expected. As protest movements succeed in becoming governing parties, they usually shed some of their most extreme posturing in favor of a more pragmatic program. For the League, however, this could be a particularly difficult task. Its previous, radical, anti-statist stance was its main selling point. Now it may contradict its current postion in the goverment.

1. Out of a total of 340 deputies.

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Many people are now asking whether there ever was anything more than protest and posturing to the movement. It seems to be simultaneously in its strongest and yet most vulnerable position, with five ministers in the new government, but uncertain if the vote will hold after losses in the June European elections. There is a sense of loss of direction and factionalism since Gianfranco Miglio, once the League's main theoretician, loudly left the party claiming that Umberto Bossi had sold out his federalist ideals.[2] After the European elections, some of the League's elected officials formed a group opposing Bossi's collaborationist position. A further conflict emerged after Maroni suggested merging the League with its partners in the governing coalition, which Bossi rejected.

The League chose the warrior as its logo back in 1982, when the movement first began.[3] Alberto symbolized the struggle against centralized bureaucracy because he too also fought against centralized foreign power in the name of Lombard freedom.[4] Just like the modern League, he organized the various peoples of Northern Italy against imperial domination. His enemy was the approaching forces of the German emperor Barbarossa. For the modern Lombard League and the Northern League it later spawned, the foreign imperial power is the Italian state in Rome. The aim is the same as Alberto's: autonomy from foreign power, and self government. Armed with its mythology of medieval independence and self-determination, the League campaigned against familiar problems that could not be solved by the compromising and deal-making of postwar Italian politics: the entangling "octopus" of interlinked occult power between government, parties, financial institutions and the Mafia; corruption, organized crime, Southern underdevelopment and high taxes.

Since 1987, the League has mobilized massive support. From the very beginning, the movement was totalized by reference to an "enemy." By identifying the problems of the Italian state with existing stereotypes of the South and Southerners, of laziness and dishonesty,[5] the movement in the early years was able to present the state's failures not as the Northerners' fault but as a result of what the League called the "Southernization" of the state. Thus Lombards did not have to wallow in self-effacing shame at the state of their state. According to League members, it was not their state. The Lombards should merely try to escape the state. 12th century Lombard mythology garnished the package and suggested that it was the Lombards' historical role to step in

2. For a sample of Miglio's work in English, see *Telos* 90 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 19-42.

3. The symbol replicates a statue of the hero superimposed on a map of Lombardy. Alberto has been a familiar figure to all students of Italian history in this century, ironically because he had been chosen by the heirs of the Risorgimento as a symbol of an anachronistic reading of Italian (not Lombard) history.

4. For a description of the choice of symbolism, see See Daniele Vimercati, *I Lombardi alla Nuova Crociata: Il "Fenomeno Lega" dall'Esordio al Triomfo — Cronaca di un Miracolo Politico* (Milan: Mursia, 1990), pp.7-8.

5. The most prominent slogan was "the League will not forgive thieving Rome."

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and fight for "freedom."[6] Although recently the League has softened its separatist demand, current internal problems exemplify the dilemma of a protest movement suddenly confronted with having to govern.

The "us vs. them" mentality is characteristic of social movements, but if the League is to become institutionalized as a political party it needs to find new ways of reconstituting itself by, e.g., developing internal democracy, which is currently non-existent. Above all, it needs to develop a clear program for devolution. With neither a clear enemy, nor clear goals, without even the collective identity of its earlier propaganda — and with no badges — the movement could go astray. The sudden need for pragmatism is general to movements that become involved in government (such as the Greens). The League, however, has the added problem that it has campaigned for at least eight of its twelve years on an explicitly anti-Southern platform, and against the state institutions they are now entrusted with managing.

Reference to a territorially defined group served clear purposes in the League's mobilization and organization of anti-state protest. The appeal worked in various ways. The League clearly articulated the Northerners' economic interests in demanding fiscal autonomy. Without the drain of Southern welfarism, taxes could be lower and services improved. Especially in the early years, the League sought to legitimate itself as a movement for self-determination — the standard criterion of modern liberty and democracy. Thus it claimed that separate institutional recognition of cultural differences was necessary for Lombards, Venetians, or Northern Italians to articulate their unique cultural-communal identity. As in all movements for institutional recognition of cultural difference, the argument was that greater democracy would be possible in smaller units.

With this strategy the League made the problems of the state accessible. Previously, corruption and inefficiency had been protected by their invisibility, pervasiveness, and the citizens' sense of partial complicity. By breaking the identification of Italians with the Italian state, the League absolved the Lombards from the guilt implied in the Italian saying that "every people gets the political class it deserves." The claim that state corruption in Italy was caused by the "Southernization" of the state rendered the problem more visible, however accurate such a claim might have been. It shook potential militants out of their fatalistic apathy. This "discovery of Lombardness" sustained the movement during the early years. There were public celebrations, anthems and songs. League badges, T-shirts, flags, keyrings and other paraphernalia also go back to this period when collective identity seemed more important than the movement's political goals.[7]

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6. A history book sold at League offices is titled *Da Ambrogio a Bossi: Lotte per la Libertà nella Padania*. It links the popular acclamation of the bishop of Milan in 374, the battle of Legnano in 1176, the free commune of Milan (1447-1450) and today's League.

7. The June 6, 1986 edition of the movement's newspaper *Lombardia Autonomista*,

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The naturalism of the appeal to cultural difference ("we Lombards have always been the most independent and free, had the best civil society in Italy. Now it is only natural that we protest") was also a call to action. Whereas separatism worked in an uneven and haphazard way, at the grassroots level the League's stress on identity had more concrete implications. It helped consolidate the movement. The League's black and white ideology was easy to convey: the North produces, the South gets fat; Southern Italians skim off their take either through the legitimate fiscal system, organized crime or corruption. League voters bought it all between 1984 and 1989, when it was the League's main position.

The mythology also kept the rank and file tightly aligned behind Bossi. At crucial points in the League's history it was this mythology (not merely centralized control in Bossi's hands) that kept the movement from splitting. A "they are out to get us" mentality pervaded League activists — "they" meaning the enemy, the "octopus" of occult power: the parties, the Mafia, big business, the media, all linked together in behind-closed-doors bargaining. When Patelli, a leading member of the League, was arrested just before the movement's conference in December 1993 (because of a suspected bribe of some 200 million lire) Bossi could readily dismiss it in his conference speech as a grossly exaggerated media set-up. Even in his Pontida[8] speech announcing the League's controversial intention to join the government he charged that the "regime media" was trying to cause confusion and splits within the League over the issue. The disparaging way the media reported early League events was fuel to the fire — it convinced militants of a party-media conspiracy to destroy the movement and stiffened their resolve. At other moments the contradictory, undemocratic manuevering of Bossi (which sometimes seemed to resemble a caricature of the "regime" politics he was attacking) was excused by his supporters as a tactic necessitated by the circumstances.

The octopus of occult power was symbolized by a stereotyped "South," contraposed to a pure, moral, responsible, honest, hardworking "North" or Lombardy. Accordingly, the League rejected government by "Roman thieves' and the "Southernization" of the Italian state. Southernization spelled corruption, inefficiency and dishonesty of the South. The League's appeal was thus for autonomy from Rome, to return to idyllic moral government of the medieval city states. Clearly, a Lombard, and later Northern sense of identity helped to motivate and organize the League. This sense of identity is seriously compromised by the League's current participation in government.

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dedicated the front page to a discussion of the medieval League. Two of the headlines read: "Today, like Yesterday, like Always, the Lombard League means FREEDOM!" and "Italy is the State, But Lombardy is Our Nation."

8. Pontida, a small village north of Milan, was the site of the 1167 rallying of the Lombard armies, gathering to battle Barbarossa. Since 1983 the Lombard League and the Northern League have adopted it as their symbolic home. After each step in their slow march toward Rome the movement would meet in the fields near the village to chant their battle cries against "thieving Rome" and listen to their leader.

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The League goes to Rome.

Understandably, Bossi was somewhat subdued when he faced the League people at a huge rally at Pontida in April 1994, informing them of his decision to join the coalition government in Rome. His speech was not as rousing as usual. The movement, he said, had to join the government to keep the untrustable fascists and Berlusconi in check — to guarantee Italy's democracy and governability. The "warrior of Legnano" was not afraid to go to Rome to institutionalize federalism and to slash the tentacles of occult power. Although the assembled crowd supported Bossi's proposals by a show of hands at the end of his speech, they may not be able to trust him to be faithful to them if he stays in Rome too long. According to League ideology, unless exercised by and for one's own people, power corrupts. The new government's apparent hesitance to redraft the constitution, and a series of damning statements by Miglio after he left the League, may lead true League autonomists to ask whether their leader has sold out.

The basic question confronting Bossi and Franco Rochetta (President of the Northern League and the new Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs in the new Italian government) is whether their references to regions (Veneto, Lombardy, Northern Italy) were merely tactics to mobilize support or if they are genuinely committed to a federalist alternative to the Italian state. In addition, the appearance and success of a new party *Forza Italia* (Go Italy) is the most serious threat to the League's very identity. *Forza Italia* was built in a few months through the institutional structures and by the staff of Silvio Berlusconi's media empire Fininvest. It is the most powerful party in the government with eight ministers in the cabinet, and draws on the same pool of voters as Bossi's League.

Forza Italia has poached the type of support that had come to the League in the last four years: small businessmen, the middle class, independent entrepreneurs.[9] Unlike the League, which was never forgiven for its anti-Southern stance and thus received no real support South of Tuscany, Berlusconi could draw support from all over Italy. Independents, and the middle class appalled by the corruption scandals and yet reluctant to vote for the "vulgar" League flocked to *Forza Italia*, despite its suspected links with the former regime. There is currently much speculation that Berlusconi's colonization of the center may force the League to retreat to its hardline ethnic stance now that Northern entrepreneurial interests are defended and protected by *Forza Italia*. Bossi's strategy is no longer federalist, but to distinguish his own constituency of small entrepreneurs from the established big business that he claims Berlusconi represents. This tactic is not helped by some leading members of his

9. In Ilvo Diamanti's 1990 study of League attitudes, he identified around 10% of supporters as "*efficientisti*," i.e., motivated by a rejection of state inefficiency and a mistrust of the will and ability of the traditional Italian parties to manage the economy. See Ilvo Diamanti's study in Renato Mannheimer *et al*, ed., *La Lega Lombarda* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1990) pp. 181-2. This type of voter undoubtedly represented a much greater proportion of the League vote in the March 1994 elections.

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party flirting with a merger with *Forza Italia* and on others suggesting alliance with the opposition Democrats of the Left. The governing coalition is far from stable. Maroni has threatened to resign over two separate issues, the latest being a decree he saw as an amnesty for corrupt politicians. The picture is complicated by Miglio's defection and threat to form a new party. If many of the League militants go to Miglio's *Unione Federalista*, however, Bossi's League could fall between two stools.

Although with only five out of 25 ministers the League has limited power in the government, it has succeeded in placing federalism on the political agenda. Its various plans for federalization, however, are now competing with many other federalist proposals currently being discussed in Italy.[10] Even the former Italian Communist Party, previously centrist (unlike the French), has put forth devolutionary proposals during the election campaign.[11] Few of the new proposals, however, match the League's demand for radical fiscal autonomy.

Miglio's departure from the League has exposed some of the internal divisions which had been swept under the rug by Bossi's hegemony. In the 1980s, while the movement was growing quickly but had little power, there were few reasons for the varying aspirations of its militants to come into conflict. Therefore, factionalism was not a serious problem. Bossi simply threw out of the movement those foolish enough to cross him, and because of the League's limited administrative responsibilities, there was no reason for the ideological positions to come into conflict. As decisions began to be made on how to exercise power, and as various leaders gained higher media profiles as Ministers, splits became more serious. The current split of Miglio from Bossi mirrors the earlier clash with Castellazzi in 1991.[12] At that time Bossi rejected Castellazzi's suggestion that the League work with "regime" parties in local government coalitions. Now he himself is accused by Miglio of consorting with the enemy in a coalition on the national level.

Since Bossi has now succeeded in placing five of his supporters in the Italian

10. Within the League there is little clarity concerning federalism. At the December party "conference," Miglio's ten commandments of federalism based on a federation of three macro regions of North, Center and South Italy was approved by a show of hands. Two days later, however, in an interview with a national newspaper, Bossi branded the proposal "a provocation" not to be taken literally. Rochetta, the League's President, openly says he disagrees with the macro-regions proposal, arguing that it replicates centralism only on a slightly smaller scale. Given the lack of internal debate, the electoral program put out by the League represents only Bossi's opinion, and it is questioned privately by other League leaders. Yet a large proportion of the League's supporters agrees on basics. Federalism should be genuinely fiscal, i.e., tax revenues should be spent where they are collected.

11. Even the "independent" Agnelli Foundation has published a series of proposals for devolution to twelve regions to replace the current twenty. For a summary, see *Mondo Economico* (April 23, 1994).

12. See Paul Piccone, "Federal Populism in Italy," p. 9; and Bernard Poche, "From Cultural Autonomy to Integral Federalism," in *Telos* 90 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 71-81.

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cabinet, the more committed federalist faction is beginning to flex its muscles. However, a new "independent movement" within the League is obviously sanctioned by Bossi and designed to keep dissatisfied separatists loyal. While Miglio's departure is at least partially explained by personal disappointment with not being offered a cabinet post, Rochetta's dissent is purely a matter of principle. Less compromising than Bossi, he is more attached to the idealization of the independent republics of medieval times and yearns for a remoralization of politics through radical federalism. At this point he does not rule out the possibility of joining Miglio in the future. For Rochetta, ethnic roots remain crucial, despite Bossi's repeated attempts to remove any ethnic reference from the League's lexicon. "Venetianness" is important to Rochetta, not merely as a strategy but as an aspiration to see the development of institutional representation of what he calls the various "peoples of Italy" and their self-government through direct democracy. His aim is to eradicate the political class in Rome and replace it with smaller, homogeneous regional units. Within the broad mass of League supporters, however, few seem to be motivated by Rochetta's communitarian utopia. Given Bossi's repeated attempts to go national with the League, and judging by recent statements, his earlier emphasis on ethnicity seems to have been mostly strategic. That, however, does not prevent him using the strategy again.[13] Maybe his aim, all along, was simply political power as such.

The founder of both the Lombard and the Northern League, Bossi is often described as charismatic. But this is something of a misnomer. He has anti-charisma. With a crude voice, a vocabulary to match, and a reluctance to smile, it is his blunt opposition to the wordy charisma of post-war Italian politicians that fascinates his admirers. Using simple, raw language, he has succeeded in mobilizing citizens that previous politicians merely confused. The League's supporters have rewarded him with a profound trust and little challenge of his leadership. They regularly compare him to the League's medieval hero, chanting "Umberto da Cassano = Alberto da Giussano" at League meetings. Since 1990, when the League first gained a significant share in administrative power, Bossi has tried to move the League away from its xenophobic past, while continuing to call for radical state decentralization. Since becoming a partner in the new government coalition, however, there have been suspicions that Bossi will compromise for the sake of power, as the communists did in the past.

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13. After extending his regional party to cover the entire North, Bossi has long dreamed of making it a national federalist party. In April 1993 he announced plans to change the name of the Northern League to the League for Federal Italy (*Lega Italia Federale*). Talks were held with regionalist groups in Sardinia. This was met with a storm of complaints from his supporters in Lombardy, who had been reared on a anti-Southern diet. They were encouraged by the Northern fundamentalist branch of the leadership, such as Miglio and Rochetta. See Ugo Bertone's account in *La Stampa* (April 24, 1993). Bossi sought to revive the idea in September 1993 by launching a newspaper called *Lega Italia Federale* to accompany the old *Lega Nord*.

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In the following interviews, Bossi and Rochetta's responses show the difficulty the League faces in transforming itself from a protest movement into a governing party. On core issues, such as fiscal federalism and integral federalism, there seem to be clear differences that could lead to future conflicts. In Rochetta's vision, there would remain only four ministries in Rome. Bossi avoids the issue altogether and does not call for abolition of any ministries. Where Bossi is quick to stress Italian national unity, indicating that he still hopes to extend his party to Southern Italy, Rochetta stresses fragmentation and a history of conflicting regional interests, holding on to the older League line that Italy is merely the state, not a nation.

On specific issues, such as health services, Bossi simply complains about corruption, while Rochetta makes clear proposals for separate regional provision, comparing Northern Italy's responsibility to the South to its responsibility to Rwanda. (Africans can be treated in Italy, and then returned home). While Bossi is more pragmatic and Thatcherite, hoping to reduce the state through privatizations, there is a moralistic tone to Rochetta's description of smaller, more "spartan" economies. He is more concerned with ethnicity and with what he sees as the injustices of the centralized Italian state since the last century. Rochetta was wearing his badge.

Interview with Umberto Bossi (May 17, 1994)

Tambini: "Integral federalism" and "fiscal federalism" seem to be fundamental points in the Northern League's program. What do they mean in practice?

Bossi: On the constitutional level, federalism is the expression of the national unity of a country, where the regional autonomies represent the cells that give life to a nation — a nation based on a division of powers. Therefore, to claim that federalism entails a disintegration of national unity is just a provocation with no legal basis. Fiscal federalism is the antithesis of the centralized partitocracy — of the denial of the rights of the contributors in the various regions to use taxes collected in those regions to finance and resolve problems specific to the region. Fiscal federalism is therefore an integral part of the national federal formula, as in federal states the world over.

In Italy, fiscal federalism will be especially important for Southern rebirth, for ending the political and economic dependence that has as a counterpart the Mafia serving "exchange votes."[14] The institutionalization of federalism in

14. Parisi and Pasquino divided Italian voting behavior into votes of *opinione* (opinion), *appartenenza* (social belonging) and of *scambio* (exchange). This last one was the vehicle of clientalism. See Alberto Parisi and Gianfranco Pasquino, "Changes in Italian Electoral Behavior: The Relationships between Parties and Voters," in *West European Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1979) pp. 6-30.

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Italy, under the European Union's principle of subsidiarity, will gradually eliminate disparities between poorer and richer regions in Italy. It will permit poorer regions to use the funds they have and aid from richer regions to effectively resolve their production and development problems.

This means, above all, to finally respect the Constitution, which provides (art. 132) for the empowerment of various regions, through a referendum. This article (along with many in the Constitution) has never been enforced or respected by the governments of the First Republic.

Tambini: Your supporters often cite the examples of Switzerland, Germany and the US as models for federalism in Italy. How is the project of the League different? How is it new?

Bossi: Our federalism is the expression of the unitary force of the country to eliminate the age-old differences, especially between the North and the Center-South. Federalism, through regional autonomies, will provide the South the means necessary to create jobs, infrastructure, productive organizations and industry. Increasing the numbers of small and medium-sized businesses will allow the South, after many years of neglect, to fully use its energy and resources. — excellent resources and energies which have not been used because of a greedy and dishonest political class serving only its own interests, its own wealth, feeding organized crime through a conspiracy of silence. It is the resilience of this corrupt political élite and the ties it has with organized crime (closely linked to the *nomenklatura*) that have prevented the development of the South's enormous agro-industrial service sector, and tourism potential.

Many times in their Congresses and in Parliament the League has outlined its plans for revamping the South and how regional autonomy in a federal context would work. This is one of the League's targets and we will do all we can to realize it.

Tambini: How exactly do you propose to dismantle the huge bureaucratic structures of the central state in Rome? There are thousands of jobs at stake there, and great concentrations of power.

Bossi: It is necessary above all to demolish the "Stato Padrone,"[15] i.e., state interference, the jumble of public authorities, wasted payments for phony public contracts awarded by the enormous bureaucratic and centralist structures.

One cannot simply invent new jobs. They will be created by encouraging productive activities, and a major role will have to be played by privatization. Clearly, within a federal framework it is necessary to review and reduce the *nomenklatura* of the state bureaucracy. This implies a careful revision of the legal

15. Thatcher's term was the "nanny state." "Stato Padrone" literally translates as "Boss State."

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status of the staff and of state functionaries, and a re-elaboration of rules regarding employment, mobility, part-time contracts and above all job security. Substantively, we need to develop norms guaranteeing more jobs without privileges for those who work either in the public or the private sector.

Tambini: Which authorities should go to the regions according to the League?

Bossi: The problems of health delivery services and unemployment are the most serious ones facing the government. Undoubtedly, health delivery service, under the League's watchful eye, will work and work well. It is useless to go into details here, but this government will definitely bring maximum therapeutic effectiveness to Italian health delivery services. This should put an end to the current practice of Italians having to travel abroad in order to receive adequate treatment.

At the same time the shameful practice of inventing "ghost hospitals,"[16] which have cost the state billions of lire, of non-functioning hospitals, of extremely expensive equipment that rusts because of the trade of the sick between hospitals and private clinics, all of this will have to stop. We have to put an end to the age of the construction of "cathedrals in the desert"[17] so that we can deal with Italy's enormous budget deficit.

Tambini: What about pensions?

Bossi: The new Minister of the Treasury has already announced his plan. According to the League, however, the social security system will have to guarantee pensions in proportion to the contributions paid. The shameful jungle of the current pension system will have to go.

The clientalistic parties will not be allowed to give out pensions hand over fist in exchange for votes — unjustified welfare pensions that cost the state billions of lire. Related to this, we have to revamp the state pension system. It should not be the unquestioned prerogative of big unions. These unions have assumed the management of pensions, but only act on behalf of the parties on which they depend.

Tambini: How would federation make a difference? Is there not a risk of reproducing, even multiplying, bureaucratic problems at the regional level?

Bossi: The autonomous regions will certainly have their managers and their

16. Here Bossi is referring to the practice of local authorities claiming funding for hospitals that do not exist.

17. This refers to publically financed infrastructure and industrial projects, built in the middle of nowhere, by implication in the South (the desert), which remain unfinished or abandoned, due to mismanagement or corruption.

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administrative organs elected by their citizens. But in creating regional autonomy and local organization it is possible to smash the suffocating spiral of the bureaucratic, party-dominated, centralist *nomenklatura*. It will be the citizens of a federal Italy, in their various regions, that elect administrators who have to account, down to the last penny, for their budgets and the services delivered.

Tambini: The League has always claimed to favor a "Europe of regions." Given that the Maastricht Treaty tends to support national states rather than regions, what reforms does the League suggest?

Bossi: Maastricht is only the beginning of a federal Europe. Either Europe will become a genuine federation or not. If the federal project is blocked by nationalism, Europe will become merely a set of customs agreements for commercial exchange. This does not seem to be the intention of the Commission or of the European Union, above all of [Jacques] Delors. It should not be forgotten that Italy will take over the European Union presidency in 1996. The League will fight within the government against any isolationist or Gaullist idea of a "*Europe des patries*," because the idea of a genuine federal Europe — including a federal Italy — is on the agenda. Even Great Britain seems ever more convinced that a federal Europe is the way to go. It should not be forgotten that the federalist nucleus of Europe was born of the will of [Alcide] De Gasperi, [Konrad] Adenaur, and [Robert]] Schumann with the signing of the Treaty of Rome.

Tambini: And the South? It sounds like the League proposes a kind of "shock therapy" for it. Is it not true that its situation will worsen in a federal system? What about the risk that in a federal system the South will be transformed into a statelet governed by various inefficient and corrupt mafias?

Bossi: I can never insist enough on the fact that only federalism can combat organized crime, undermining the mafias through defense of regional autonomies, in close cooperation with the state. And it is time to stop looking at Italy as if it were a "nation at risk" because of the Mafia. The Mafia exists all over the world. In many of the most advanced and richest countries there are "mafias" much more powerful and better organized than the Italian Mafia and Camorra. The presence of the Northern League in the government, especially through its policies towards the Center-South, is the guarantee of a complete purge of the political class linked to "*Tangentopoli*." Solidarity among all Italians, from the Alps to Lampedusa, will be essential for the South's resurrection. I do not even have to reiterate that this will be possible only through the evolution of the First Italian Republic into the Second, which will be federal.

Tambini: Will the League propose any new policies for immigration from outside the European Community?

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Bossi: The League has always been clear on the matter. To claim that the League was against immigration would be a distortion. Rather, the League seeks to protect immigrants, proposing that they should be permitted entry only with some guarantees: a work contract guaranteed by an employer, a place to live, and the right to welfare and social security. The League opposes any law that ignores the rights of Italian citizens overwhelmend by enormous waves of illegal immigrants. These immigrants have ended up as tools of the Mafia. So any foreigners (obviously other than European Community citizens) who come into Italy, should have a permit guaranteeing that they have what they need for the duration of their stay in Italy, just like all Italian citizens. Above all, admission "quotas" should not cause major increases in the numbers of unemployed Italians, fed by the parallel phenomenon of exploitation through black market labor.

Interview with Franco Rocchetta (May 6-31, 1994)

Tambini: We are in Rome in the offices of the parliamentary party of the Northern League. The same Northern League struggled for 10 years against "Rome's rule" in Northern Italy. Do you think it is clear to your supporters that you have not made a compromise? Do your voters think there is a contradiction there?

Rocchetta: Absolutely not. We have always spoken about home rule, not about independence. It is normal that, as a popular democratic force, we reach the main Parliament of this Republic. In the past years we have also entered regional parliaments. They enjoy some autonomy, but not enough according to our needs. It is therefore our duty to join the government. We have always argued that we have to rewrite the Constitution. To write a new Constitution we have to be in these offices and be active members of both chambers of the Parliament.

Tambini: "Integral Federalism" and "fiscal federalism" are fundamental points in the Northern League's program. What do they mean in practice?

Rocchetta: Integral Federalism means maximum self-government, maximum harmonization. It means a system of government in which the different parts of Italy can each develop the best form of self-government and reciprocal cooperation. Italian unity has yet to be achieved. Even today, every part of Italy has its own economy. Therefore, autonomy will have to be very pronounced to allow these economies to develop freely, in order to guarantee well-being to each population and therefore to all.

Why do I insist on these points? Because of the tragic history of the last 130 years. Because most Italian states were sovereign and legitimate until unification.

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Thanks to the wisdom of their leaders and of laws tried and tested over many centuries, their populations lived better than after the installation of the new, rigidly centralized regime. This regime was violently exploitative, fundamentally colonial, imposed by the Savoys on all the different peoples, all the former Italian states.

This is why federalism, fiscal federalism, will benefit all facets of Italian life — including socio-economic realities that have much more than simply the memory of how they were before. Today they still have their own rhythm and characteristics. The League's project is not the imposition of a theoretical federal model: we will not simply redraw the map as was done in Africa. It is to permit, in a very liberal system, the voices of the 20 regional parliaments to be at the center of discussions concerning the new Constitution.

Tambini: Your supporters often cite the examples of Switzerland, Germany and the U.S. as models for federalism in Italy. How is the project of the League different? How is it new?

Rocchetta: It is new because it is a project born of immediate Italian needs. It is a project that takes Switzerland, Germany and the US as reference points, but cannot ignore the histories of each of the particular Italian peoples. And it cannot ignore the distortions, the illnesses and wounds inflicted by more than 100 years of centralism.

Italy is not virgin territory. It is not Canada or Australia. It is a territory in which many different peoples have lived for over three thousand years — different peoples that have learned to cooperate with one another, but have maintained their differences similar to those that distinguish the Spanish from the French, the Catalans from the Castilians the Flemish from the Waloons, or even the Danish from the Germans. So all these peoples are characterized by a different culture and socio-economic system. All, in given historical epochs, have had their own national structures. It is not true, as some suggest, that Italy is a nation simply unified later than others. In reality, the Italian nation-states were consolidated in previous centuries: the Tuscan state, the Venetian state, the Neapolitan and Sicilian states, the Lombard state and the Piedmontese state. Then there was also the Ligurian state, and the unique, world apart, Papal state.

Tambini: In practice, what does this mean for the League's project? What authorities should go to the regions? The health system, for example? Is it simply that the rich North will no longer pay for the poor South?

Rocchetta: They will be very similar to the German *Länder* or the American states. I personally prefer the Canadian model, because it is a model in progress. There is no need to decide immediately the states' authorities. There needs to be an on-going discussion. The regions are not all the same.

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Two years ago, the League called for the formation of a bicameral commission to deal with the Constitution. This commision submitted some very advanced proposals, but did not consider the needs of regional parliaments, which had their own pressing needs. I myself, as head of the League group in the commission, asked that the heads of the regional assemblies be included. The presidents of the regional assemblies made the members of the commission (who generally were living in another world to the local realities) understand the real needs of the 20 regions. The regions express the peoples' interests, because they are closer to them than Rome, which is like another planet. Some of the lazier regional assemblies may still long for a centralized welfare system where everything comes from the center. In most of Italy today, however, there is a real commitment to participation and responsibility.

So, if the question is how would the decentralized health system work, I refuse to consider Italy in terms of North and South. I think of it in terms of the different social and economic realities that have been more or less ruined by the centralized system. There are regions that are not Northern (the Marche, Abruzzi, Puglia), with economies that are becoming competitive with those of Lombardy and Piedmont. Even if the populations are different, North and South is not the question. There are regions where the links between centralized bureaucracy and organized crime render the problem even worse (Campania and Sicily). But since the party system is now destroyed and the Mafia is therefore deprived of its support system, we have signs that spontaneous small industries, medium-sized enterprises can in the next five to eight years undergo a great economic boom in Sicily, Catania and so on. Puglia is already on its way. So I do not see the North rich and industrial and the South agricultural and poor as an eternal condition.

Tambini: Education, for example: Will it be controlled at regional levels?

Rocchetta: All to the regions — education to the regions, health to the regions. Military service decentralized. . . . The draft will be conducted on a regional basis, but with coordination between regions. The ministries that will remain centrally run in Rome will be four: the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Economic Coordination.

Tambini: Health services: How do you suggest to organize them in a federal system?

Rocchetta: I am about to leave for Rwanda to take some children that have been mutilated and bring them back for treatment.

Tambini: This sounds like show-business . . .

Rocchetta: It is not a matter of propaganda, but children. . . . We are at the moment

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building hospitals to cure some of the wounded of the war. Some of these children have conditions that these hospitals are not able to treat. So we will bring them back to treat rather than make propaganda: to heal them and then to take them back — if not to Rwanda, to areas with a similar . . . climate not too different from the one they are used to.

Tambini: So, why are you telling me this?

Rocchetta: To indicate that the regionalization of health delivery services does not mean that the rich regions will treat their sick well, and in the poor regions they will lie there with open wounds. Solidarity, cooperation and help will always be there — most of all from Veneto, with its leading medical profession famous the world over.

Veneto is also on the leading edge of reform. Remember it was Veneto that two years ago held a referendum to abolish the Ministry of Health and develop its own taxation and health system. In these proposals, of course, there will be solidarity coordinated by the central government in collaboration with the regions. I envision a council of 4 or 5 officials from the central government and the 20 presidents of the regions to deal with these kinds of issues.

Tambini: Consider the following example: I am a Lombard, and I have a condition that a Neapolitan hospital is the best equipped to deal with.

Rocchetta: You would have to make a request to your own hospital, which would be forwarded, along with a claim for payment.

Tambini: It sounds like more jobs for bureaucrats.

Rocchetta: More bed places are needed everywhere. It is also necessary to reduce bureaucracy everywhere. The latter, however, will be reduced by computers.

Tambini: What about pensions?

Rocchetta: With pensions, the story is much more complex. There should be a privatized system. The present Social Security System is about to go bankrupt — at least as far as I can judge from the figures I have seen.

Tambini: The League has always claimed to favor a "Europe of regions." Given that the Maastricht Treaty tends to support national states rather than regions, what reforms does the League suggest?

Rocchetta: Accompanying this process of regionalization (which is now becoming federalization in Italy), there is a process of European integration. Every Italian region is like a Holland, which is not very big. Denmark and Luxembourg are

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smaller. In comparison to the regions of Italy, many of the 12 countries that make up the European Union are of similar size. If the European Union integrates on the basis of those states, Veneto, Sicily and Lombardy will not retreat into themselves.

We never spoke of independence for Veneto, however, but of the construction of a federal Europe. This has to be realized through states that are themselves federations. It would be absurd and dangerous to create a united Europe made only of nationalist and chauvinist governments. All the countries of the European Union are different. They have to be harmonized.

On Maastricht, the crucial principle has always been subsidiarity, and it was ratified on that basis. The nascent Committee of Regions is the newest expression of that principle, and will soon merge with the spontaneously organized Assembly of European Regions. Before the end of the century there will be two European parliaments: one based on regions and another based on nations.

Tambini: And the South?

Rocchetta: Progressive autonomy does not lead to fractures and conflicts. We are convinced that the poverty in many Italian states, along with moral and civil underdevelopment, cannot be resolved paternalistically from above. They have to be dealt with by the populations themselves through self government.

I will give you some background. The entire Italian state from the 1940s to the 1990s has been dominated by the Mafia through partitocracy. Institutionally and politically, the state has been weak and needed the Mafia to stay afloat. Before then it had been a much more marginal phenomenon. It was the party-men that empowered the Mafia through the "*voto di scambio*." So how would this change in a federal system? This is the question.

The system of power has collected and distributed enormous riches over the last century. It used a large proportion of that money to perpetrate the power holders' position and reproduce the system. If taxes were collected and distributed locally, this massive, anonymous flow of money would simply dry up.

Maybe it is only a dream, but I am convinced I have my feet on the ground. In a federal system much more spartan economies will develop: less waste also in the Southern regions. The economies will be smaller and poorer, but federalist reforms will stimulate economic activity and development. The economic tissue we are helping to construct will not be just a privilege of the states of Lombardy and Veneto. It will be there in all of Italy.

Tambini: Describe your proposals for immigration.

Rocchetta: It has to be regulated by precise and rigorous laws. Immigration has to be allowed for those people who already have a job and a place to live. Today it is not so. There is an enormous number of illegal immigrants.

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Tambini: How can you control immigration, given that borders are ever more open within Europe?

Rocchetta: Every country has different rules, but there are countries such as France and Germany that have more severe rules than ours. We need control mechanisms not only at the state level but also between regions. This is not to choke the circulation of men and ideas, but to check the slave market. The League was the first to understand this, but now the Church has also realized that this immigration is not a spontaneous act of brotherhood or civilization. This has to be controlled at the regional and local government level. We have absurd situations in which a town's government does not allow gypsies to camp. So the gypsies just move on to the next towns. There has to be some coordination. Clearly, every citizen has to respect certain rules. This whole issue of immigration has been instrumentalized by the Left to make it seem that we wanted to create a police state. We do not want a police state: only an ordered society, based on consensus, not repression.

Tambini: I do not think I have understood properly. How are you going to control these movements of people without authoritarian controls?

Rocchetta: If you drive a car you have to have a drivier's license. We are not asking for police barriers between regions. We ask only that all the police periodically check people.

Tambini: The African immigrants I have seen here are generally quite poor. I have not seen many in cars.

Rocchetta: Often they drive and they also cause accidents. All people living in a house have to be registered. All those who work have documents that show their position. There are already state structures to deal with this. It is a very simple question. If we need Japanese surgeons, Japanese surgeons should come here, and they should work here under our laws, with dignity.

Tambini: Regarding Miglio's recent break with Bossi, and Miglio's call for the formation of a new federalist party: On whose side is Liga Veneta?

Rocchetta: (*Laughs*) The Northern League is an active functioning party. It is a partner in government. Miglio's party is merely a hypothesis.

Tambini: For other Italian parties the regions are just administrative units. I have the impression that for the League they are something more.

Rocchetta: They are nations. The Netherlands and Ireland are not regions but nations. So, realities such as Tuscany, Lombardy, Veneto or Sicily are really

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European nations. Each of our regions is a homogenous society. Usually there is a great deal of overlap between administrative boundaries and historical, economic and social boundaries.

Tambini: How are they homogenous? Ethnically? Linguistically?

Rocchetta: An extremely thick and rich homogeneity. Each region has a strong identity. You can recognize it studying every kind of parameter. There is an equilibrium inside every region, and every region breathes in its own rhythm and mechanisms. They have existed for millenia.

Tambini: Why? Are they economic units? Political units?

Rocchetta: Before starting the Liga Veneto I wanted to find out what Europe was. I travelled a lot, East and West. I learned that it is not correct to see Europe as a group of homogenous nations. There are some states which are homogenous, others which are not. Maybe you and I have different concepts of the word nation. Usually nation means a state. But a nation also means something different. Scotland is a nation, and so is Wales. Sicily is a nation in the same way Scotland or Ireland is a nation.

Tambini: Perhaps you could be specific and tell me exactly why Scotland is a nation. Are they people with a common origin, is it the culture, or is it a political-economic unit?

Rocchetta: You cannot firmly divide these parameters. In Ireland almost everyone speaks English. The young learn it if they have to, or choose to. But still we recognize Ireland as a nation. Officially, Ireland has been an independent republic for more than seventy years. Northern Ireland is another question. When I travelled there I learned that it is absurd to use bloodshed to create a new boundary or new institutional structures. This is what is happening now in Croatia and Bosnia. But, really, Croats are not Serbs, and Scots are not Englishman. Should the Scots fight the English? I do not think so. If you ask me what the reality of Quebec is — is it religeous, linguistic, economic? I would answer that I see all these differences. They speak a different language, and they also have a different origin. Not that all Quebeckers are of the same origin. There are 100.000 Quebeckers whose roots are Eastern and Southern European, not French. I am Venetian. We are a nation of 5 million in Europe. But there are more than twice that number of Venetians in Brazil. Some of this American, Venetian nation have black skin, but they speak Venetian, they are part of the nation. Some are of German or Polish stock, but they became part of the Venetian community. It is not simply a linguistic problem, or a cultural problem. It as a spontaneous organization of society in a particular way. Economic structures and ways of life are exactly the same for Venetians in South America and

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in Veneto — not because of some teachers or managers flying between Veneto and South America, but simply because culture is more than music and language. It is the way you spontaneously organize your society.

Tambini: You do not recognize Italy as a nation.

Rocchetta: I recognize Italy as a state. Take a country like Spain. Catalans, Basques and Galicians see themselves as nations. I recognize many different peoples in Italy. The Venetians are not the same as the Tuscans. Institutionally, there is something extremely interesting. Italy is divided into twenty regions, each with its own parliament and some laws. They do not have fiscal autonomy, however. Each of the regions has produced its own Constitution. If you read the 1970 Constitution of the Venetian region, you read a chapter about the Venetian people. The Constitution says that the Venetian people have the right to organize themselves according to their own abilities and traditions of self government. According to this document, if we recognize the existence of the Venetian people, we have to accept the reality of the Venetian people. Thus there are various peoples not just because of history, but because they consider themselves a people.

Tambini: You really think that most people in Veneto consider themselves Venetian people and not Italian people?

Rocchetta: This is also a very interesting question. Self-conciousness is not the same in every region. Also, levels of self-conciousness can be changed, improved or reduced according to social and cultural conditioning. The nation is often assumed to be synonymous with the state. But there is a rich tradition of independent states in Italy, whose history is older than that of Italy. Thus Piedmont, Tuscany and the two kingdoms of Sicily have histories going back many centuries. Southern Italy has been a unitary state for more than 800 years. In Northern Italy we have had many more states. This eight centuries of centralization can explain some of the Southerners' attitudes. Another aspect to remember is that state structures and bureaucracy can strengthen existing characteristics and create new ones. A nation which has been independent for more than one thousand years will have a different self-conciousness to one that has lost its independence two or five centuries ago.

Tambini: What have the League mayors in the Veneto done?

Rocchetta: Most of them have been in power only 6 months. They have managed to find out how many useless and illegal expenses there were in the old administrations. This has led to an uproar in the population, which has realized it has made sacrifices in previous years for no reason — sacrifices in taxes, in living with bad public services, bad hospitals and so on. They were useless sacrifices.

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Tambini: Then the priority was economic.

Rocchetta: And therefore necessarily moral. Before, when there were alternations of power between Communists and Christian Democrats every change was merely a change of personnel, not of the system. These new League adminstrators have chosen a new road. This is why it is a moral question. We have tried to train the new administrators.

Tambini: How has the League coordinated these Mayors' policies?

Rocchetta: With regular meetings of all League mayors every six weeks or so. They include some League leaders, some members of Parliament and some senators.

Tambini: The mayors discuss their programs? Are there any votes?

Rocchetta: There are no votes. Since the League is currently a movement without factions, without internal conflicts, these meetings are not to vote but to exchange experiences and advice. So if a town has a problem with the health system, security, maybe even with immigration from the Third World or gypsies, mayors should share this experience with the others.

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The ``Conservative Revolution'' in Sweden

Nikolaj-Klaus von Kreitor

A recent issue of the Swedish journal *ResPublica* focuses on the meaning and impact of the German "Conservative Revolution" in Scandinavia.[1] Edited by Göran Dahl and Carl-Göran Heidegren,[2] it contains translations from Ernst Jünger's *Der Arbeiter*; analyses of the "Conservative Revolution" by Eric Bolle, Louis Dupeux and Ellen Kennedy, as well as excerpts from Carl Schmitt's *Politische Theologie*, *Land und Meer* and *Glossarium*.

Taking Armin Mohler's standard text on the German "Conservative Revolution"[3] as their point of departure, Dahl's and Heidegren's introductory essay, "The Magic Zero Hour," provides an interesting overview of the subject. Mohler identified three main ideological lines within revolutionary conservatism: 1) the folkish; 2) the young conservative; and 3) the national revolutionary. The folkish current was anti-intellectual and irrational. Its influence during Weimar was very limited, although during the Third Reich Himmler, Rosenberg and even Hitler subscribed to it. The young conservative branch was closely associated with the older traditional conservatism committed to defend Christian values. It was the least revolutionary group and was not irreconcilably opposed to the Weimar Republic.[4] The national-revolutionaries were the most radical, anti-Weimar and anti-capitalist group. They were anti-Western and close to the Thomas Mann of *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*. Criticism of the West was equated with criticism of capitalism and Anglo-Saxon influences disguised as progress, liberalism and democracy.[5] The "West" was considered

1. *ResPublica* 23 (Fall 1993), published by Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposium, (Römmeholm 6, 24036 Stehag, Sweden)

2. Dahl teaches sociology at the University of Lund and is responsible for the Schmitt part in the issue. See his "Individ Och Kapital. Till Begripandet av den Subjectiva Faktorn Under Kapitalismen," in *Tekla*, Vol. 6 (1979); *Begär Och Kritik* (1986), and *Psykoanalys Och Kulturkritik* (1992). Heidegren is responsible for the Ernst Jünger part. He has written *Filosofi och Revolution. Hegels Väg Till Visdom* (1984) and *Hegel. Behovet av filosofin* (1992)

3. Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932. Grundriß ihrer Weltanschaungen* (1950).

4. According to Dahl and Heidegren, "A central leitmotif in their ideology was the concept of empire (*Reich*) as a supra-state formation, different and opposed to both the nation-state and the imperialist state. Their ideal was a decentralized multi-ethnic empire under German domination — a domination achieved by virtue of the size of the German population, as well as its industrial and cultural predominance." See their "Den Magiska Nollpunlten," in *ResPublica*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

5. As Mann put it: "Whatever the state of Germanys spiritual power of resistance

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synonymous with the Anglo-Saxon world. This dislike of the West translated into a corresponding pro-Eastern orientation toward Russia.[6]

Ernst Jünger, the National Bolshevik Ernst Niekisch, and Otto Strasser (the National Socialist leader of the Black Front), were the most prominent representatives of the national-revolutionaries. As Dahl and Heidegren point out, capitalism was considered anti-German — an Anglo-Saxon imposition and a deadly threat to culture and the quality of life. This movement was influenced by Werner Sombart's *Händler und Helden* (1915), which contraposed the hero to the shopkeeper. England, of course, was regarded as a nation of shopkeepers. Conservative revolutionaries were also critical of the political expression of capitalism — a liberalism predicated on atomistic, individualistic principles which undermined all organic communities.[7]

Dahl and Heidegren follow Mohler in focusing on the Nietzschean side of the "Conservative Revolution": the dichotomy of linear and cyclical concepts of history (the notion of Eternal Return), the contraposition of progress and inner and outer organic development, the conviction that falls are also rebirths. All this is historically significant, but neither representative nor decisive. More interesting is the discussion of the relation between cultural pessimism and voluntarism — a relation comparable to that of illness and medicine. According to Dupeux,[8]

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may be today (May 1917), in 1914 she had recognized as superstition the belief that Western ideas were still the leading, victorious and revolutionary ones; she was convinced that progress, modernity, youth, genius, and novelty were on the German side; she thought it patently clear that, compared with the conservatism of the immortal principles, her own psychological conservatism signified something truly revolutionary." Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1983), p. 256. Here Mann quotes Dostoevsky, who wrote "The most characteristic, most essential trait of this great, proud, and special people has always been, since the first moment of its appearance in the historical world, that it has never, neither in its destiny nor in its principles, wanted to be united with the far Western World." *Ibid.*, p. 26. Furthermore, Mann noted: "Whoever would aspire to transform Germany into a middle-class democracy in the Western-Roman sense and spirit would wish to take away from her all that is best and complex, to take away the problematic character that really makes up her nationality; he would make her dull, shallow, stupid, and un-German, and he would therefore be an antinationalist who insisted that Germany become a nation in a foreign sense and spirit." *Ibid.*, p. 36.

6. This anti-Western and pro-Russian orientation had many supporters within the German General Staff (General von Seeckt being the most prominent representative) and within the Foreign Ministry (the so-called group of "*Osterners*" — the architects of the Rappalo Treaty).

7. As Moeller van den Bruck put it in *Das Dritte Reich* (quoted in Göran Dahl and Carl-Göran "Heidegren — Den magiska nollpunkten" in *ResPublica*, *op. cit.*, p.10): "Liberalism has ruined cultures, undermined religions, and destroyed nations and fatherlands. Liberalism is the self-dissolution of mankind."

8. Louis Dupeux, "Konservative revolution och modernitet" in *ResPublica*, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-169. Dupeux claims that the most important feature of the Conservative Revolution is the emphasis on *life*, "which, after Nietzsche, takes the role of the Right's antagonist to the Left's concept of *reason* — a concept of life Mann defined as 'the key concept of every modern *Weltanschauung*'."

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voluntarism became the foundation of a new optimism — what Moeller van den Bruck called a conservative optimism based on notions of national rebirth, self-affirmation and national identity as the trans-individual subject of history. The Conservative Revolution's vitalist and decisionist approach to society, people, and international relations cannot be understood independently of the concept of *life* and *Lebensphilosophie*. In Lukács' words: it deployed "intuition as its organon and the irrational as its natural object."[9]

In one of the main contributions to this issue of *ResPublica,* Kennedy follows Habermas in claiming that Schmitt developed an expressionist concept of the political.[10] According to Habermas, "The political manifests itself in the collective organized self-assertion of a 'politically existing' people against external and internal enemies . . . A people welded together in a battle for life and death asserts its uniqueness against both external enemies and traitors within its own ranks. The political extreme case is characterized in terms of the phenomenon of defining ones own identity in the struggle against the alienness of the enemy who threatens ones very existence, and thus in terms of the situation of war between people or civil war."[11] As Lukács wrote almost half a century ago, however, Schmitt developed an *existentialist* concept of the political, since he saw the Versailles system as a threat to Germany's national existence.[12] This is why he called for a concept of international law defending national existence — something very close to what Hegel had advocated.[13]

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9. Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason* (Atlantic Highlights, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), p. 402.

10. Ellen Kennedy, "Kulturkritiska Och Metafysiska Källor Till Begreppet det Politiska Hos Carl Schmitt," in *Respublica*, pp. 96-116.

11. Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 128-139.

12. Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, *op. cit.*, p. 658. Agnes Heller claims that Lukács, Heidegger and Schmitt all focus on the concept of existential choice: "The idea of collective existential choice thus emerged almost naturally in their closely similar visions and theoretical interests. The political appeared to them to identify the essence and existence in community. When a collective entity chooses itself and thus its own destiny, the political act *par excellence* has already been accomplished. In Lukács it is the empirical proletariat, this merely economic class, which is bound to choose itself and thus its own destiny. The moment of proletarian revolution is the very moment of constituting the political. In Heidegger it is the nation, the empirical German nation, which is bound to become fully political in the gesture of self-choice. This is what happens in the 'German revolution' which is a quintessential political gesture." See Agnes Heller, "The Concept of the Political Revisited," in David Held, ed., *Political Theory Today* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 334.

13. Hegel defined the individuality of sovereign states in relation to other states. Only by preserving its uniqueness can a state preserve its sovereignty. Since a state's sovereignty is the basis of its relations to other states, the rights of sovereign states are exercised only through a particular and not a universal will. Hegel rejected Kant's idea of an early League of Nations, a formalized Holy Alliance in post-1815 Restoration Europe. He claimed that the nature of sovereignty was the right to create and oppose an enemy. Whenever war breaks out between two sovereign states it is because two sets of rights,

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What is missing in this special issue of *ResPublica* is a discussion on two important issues: the history of the ideology of the Conservative Revolution in Sweden and its relevance today. The so-called "Swedish model" was not only the most successful implementation of the ideology of the Conservative Revolution but also the most advanced form of corporatism. Sweden perfected the economic strategies developed in Italy and Germany in the interwar years. Swedish social democracy (*Folkhemmet* — peoples' state, *Volksstaat*, a corporativist organic *Gemeinschaft*) was heralded as "the third way," a social formation between capitalism and socialism. It was very similar to Prussian socialism. The foundation of the state was laid after the 1938 Saltsjöbaden Agreement between trade unions and the employers' association, which outlawed strikes and institutionalized centralized wage bargaining for the entire nation.

Swedish social democracy also incorporated many folkish components.[14] The substance of *Folkhemmet* was a racially defined *Folkgemenskap* (*Volksgemeinschaft*, Peoples Community). Membership in the *Folkgemenskap* was predicated on nationality. Membership was restricted to those belonging to *Den Svenska Folkstammen* (*Volkstum*, the Swedish Racial Group). Minorities living in Sweden, such as the Tornedal Finns, were excluded by virtue of not being members of the *Volkstum*. The social democratic slogan of national and political unity became *staten, rörelsen, folket* (*Staat, Bewegung, Volk*),[15] — the organic totality of the state, the movement (the Social-Democratic Party), and the people. Sweden even designated Scandinavia, and above all Finland and Norway, as part of a Swedish *Grossraum* — a small one, but still a *Grossraum*.

The criticism of Swedish legislation during the 1970s stressed the non-normative, decisionist substance of the legislation, the use of the so-called "general clause" as a legislative tool conferring on legislation the character of *promisses imperecta* — a conduit for the bureaucrats' decisionist free reign. It functioned as a general exception to the legislation's normative use and substance. The social

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each legitimate in its own way, clash. For Hegel, wars are always clashes between two rights, not between right and wrong. Hence the outcome never proves one side right and the other wrong, but only which right will yield to the other. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 208-216; see also Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 194-207.

14. For a discussion of Swedish folkish ideology during the 1920s, see Rolf Torstendahl, *Mellan Nykonservatism Och Liberalism* (Uppsala, 1969).

15. In the Swedish government's bill in Parliament (*Rikstag*) introducing the 1927 Immigration law it was stated that "the value of the homogenous and pure race of the people of our country cannot be overestimated." See Thomas Hammar, *Sverige åt svenskarna*, (Stockholm, 1964), p. 357; and Hans Lindberg, *Svensk flytingpolik under internationellt tryck, 1936-1941*,(Stockholm: Allmäna Förlaget, 1973), p. 37. The main function of the 1927 Immigration Law was to protect the racial purity of the Swedish *Volkstum*. At any rate, even today Swedish law does not recognize the existence or even the concept of minorities. See Petran, "Minoriternas råttsställning i Sverige" in David Schwarz, *Identitet och minoritet*, (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell Förlag, 1971), p. 28

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demoncratic jurist, Axel Hägerström, equated power with law. According to him, "the structure of power is the structure of law."[16] The state and power are identified with those who exercise permanent, real power in such a way that their collective will is acknowledged as the state's will. Upper bureaucracy (the Swedish *Ämbetsmän*) is identical with power and, consequently, with the state. According to Hägerström "Constitutional laws, which regulate the actions of the highest powerholders, and the limits of their power, should be regarded as standardization of declarations of will. Thus constitutional law expresses the common will of those same powerholders. If sometimes one of them does not want to follow the law, the latter ceases to have legal validity. An unconstitutional procedure by such a powerholder (*makthavare*) is thus impossible. In such cases the constitution becomes meaningless. It can also be said that the constitution, like every rule of law, ceases to have any legal meaning when it is no longer in use. In my opinion, constitutional law is not applicable to the highest powerholders. They can proceed in any way they like and as far as they like, arbitrarily breaching established law — this would not be against any of the constitutional provisions, from the viewpoint of the constitution's own meaning."[17]

The omnipotent sovereign in the Swedish peoples state became the *Ämbetsmän*, resulting, as critics have argued, in an absolutist bureaucratic state.[18] *Folkhemmet*, the Swedish peoples state, is now gone. Along with bureaucratic centralist regimes of the former Soviet Union and its satellites, it simply collapsed under the weight of its own inefficiency, waste, corruption and counterproductivity. It has been replaced by a Thatcherite economic liberalism which, however, has had as its immediate consequence a sharp decline in living standards, the dismantling of social security and labor legislation, economic destabilization, cultural decline and rising criminality. The Swedish economy is now in shambles. Rudolf Meidner and Rianne Mahon define the demise of the peoples state as a "system shift." The economic consequences of this shift is the dismantling of the welfare state, privatization of state monopolies, abandonment of the

16. Axel Hägerström, *Rätten Och Viljan* (Lund, 1961), p. 71.

17. *Ibid.*

18. See Nikolaj-Klaus von Kreitor, "Beamtendiktatur auf Schwedisch," in *Demokratie und Recht*, No. 4 (979); "Das Ausnahmegesetz — das Schwedische Model der repressiven Gesetzgebung," in *Democratie und Recht*, No. 4 (1979); "Schweden Bricht das Abkommen von Helsinki," in *Frankfurter Hefte*, No. 9 (1980); "Das Schwedische Model . . . der Zenzsur," in *Blätter für Deutsche und Internationale Politik*, No. 10 (1978); "Berufsverbot en Suecia," in *Argumentos*, No. 27 (1979); "Undantagslagen: Skyddar Högre Ämbetsmän. Kränker Fri- Och Rättigheter," in *Jusek*, Nop. 4 (1980); "Undantagslagen Och Rättsstatens Kris," in *Svensk Rättsforum*, No. 18 (1979); "Malsägandetalan Mot Höga Ämbetsmätsmän Upphävd," in *Oikeus*, No. 2 (1979), and *Medborgarrättsrörelsen*, No. 4 (1979); "Folkhemsmytens Nedgang Och Fall. Charta 79 Och den Demokratiska Oppositionen i Sverige," in *Soihtu*, No. 5 (1980); "Undantagslagen — Ett Exempel pa Repressiv Lagstftning," in *Retfaerd — Scandinavia Law Review*, No. 11 (1979); "Kansankodin Kuokavieras. Omaelämkerralinen Ruotsalaisen Jhteiskunnan Korporativismen ritiikki," (Helsinki: Gummerus Förlag, 1980). See also Stephan Wehowsky, *Schatten Gesellschaft* (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1994).

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policy of full employment, a rise in non-productive speculative investment resulting in destabilization of the economy and a substantial loss of manufacturing jobs. The system shift "required an assault on the core institutions sustaining wage earner solidarity, especially the system of nationwide collective bargaining through which the unions had pursued their solidaristic wage strategy."[19] Decentralization of collective bargaining, which has been in force since the Saltsjöbaden Agreement, led to an assault on labor unions, labor laws, and social welfare. Meidner and Mahon describe how the deregulation of the currency and of foreign investments has resulted not only in a substantial capital outflow and migration of Swedish companies abroad in the name of multinationalism, but also in virtual deindustrialization and the pauperization of large segments of the population.

In retrospect, the alleged omnipotence of the social democratic *Ämbetsmän* (the Swedish *Nomenklatura*) appears benevolent in comparison to the omnipotence of abstract capital. After the fall of the Berlin Wall of the Swedish peoples state, there has been a deterioration of the quality of life. That is why Dahl and Heidegren conclude their introduction by claiming: "Today, as during the Weimar epoch, is a time of conflict, crisis and transition. In light of developments in Russia and Yugoslavia, the optimism of 1989 has given way to a hopeless pessimism. In turbulent epochs old concepts can no longer grasp reality. An unstructured reality, however, is fertile soil for new or old-new ideas. Whatever one thinks about the Conservative Revolution, we believe it is something to take into account in the future."

This raises the issue of the relevance of the Conservative Revolution after the end of the Cold War. This political phenomenon cannot be understood independently of three historical traumas: "the Death of God," popularized by Nietzsche, WWI and the Treaty of Versailles. The resurgence of the ideological tendencies similar to those advocated by the Conservative Revolution can be seen as a reaction to today's instability. In this context, the concept of Europe as a New World has been developed by the European New Right — primarily within French debate — as a possible answer.

The substance of this concept is the alleged reversal of historical roles: when the original Monroe Doctrine was deployed by the US in 1823, America was "the New World," in opposition to the Europe of the Holy Alliance — the Old World. In the 1990s, those who seek to recycle the ideology of the Conservative Revolution would like to reverse the positions. Allegedly, the US now represents the interventionist world of the past while the New Europe is the world of the future. This notion of Europe as a New World and the recycling of long forgotten worldviews, such as the ideology of the Conservative Revolution, represent not only a reaction against what is perceived as world government under the domination of multinational capital but also an expression of a geopolitical vacuum at a time when the old is no more but the new is not yet.

19. Rianne Mahon and Rudolf Meidner, "System Shift or What is the Future of Swedish Social Democracy" in *Socialist Review*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1994) p. 65

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No Czechs or Dogs Allowed: The Former Praxis International *in Prague*

Aviezer Tucker

In mid-April the leadership of the Ivy League's critical *avant-garde* and some others met in Prague for a conference. True to the old maxim that "the greatest enemy of 'Critical Theory' is criticism," Czechs were excluded from participation. This conference used to take place in Dubrovnik and center around the journal *Praxis International*. Now the fate of *Praxis International* is no better than that of Dubrovnik, and the yearly April conference has relocated to Villa Lanna in Prague, owned and operated by the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Columbia University's Jean Cohen (with some help from Alessandro Ferrara from Rome) organized the conference as a clandestine operation. She was well aware the dangers might involve the possible infiltration of Czech natives. No Czechs were invited as speakers or observers, despite suggestions from members of Cohen's own group and requests from the Czech Academy of Science. Letters sent by Czechs were not answered. Contacts with Czechs were limited to the service staff of the Villa, and a single Czech academic, acting as a mediator between Cohen and the service staff. Information about the conference was not distributed to non-participants and was not posted in advance at Prague's universities.

Still, Cohen was aware that it would be difficult to keep the conference a secret. A leak was bound to happen. But when the going gets tough, the tough get tougher. Cohen divided the participants into two groups. First, came the inner circle of the Ivy League dictatorship of the academically oppressed: Cohen herself from Columbia; Seyla Benhabib and Frank Michelman from Harvard; Axel Honneth from Frankfurt, Alessandro Ferrara from Rome, etc. (let us call them *Jurassic Park*). They spoke on the first three days of the conference. Then came the second group from the outer circle, considered "inferior" to those in the first group, e.g., Richard Wolin and Martin Matustik. The second group was made to speak after the weekend, after the exalted members of *Jurassic Park* flew out of Prague over the weekend to their respective ivory tower hiding places. Thus, the *Jurassic Park* "inner circle" of academic oligopoly managers had neither to listen to the "inferior" members of the second group, who had to listen to their "superiors," nor run the risk of encountering some Czech intellectuals who might have heard rumors about the conference over the weekend. Through this wise design, the members of *Jurassic Park*,

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managed to seclude themselves from those considered intellectually inferior (and Czech reality). They came, they stayed in fivestar hotels, they talked among themselves, they left, and the Czechs cleaned up after them. Is it not nice to be a *Pukka Sahib* like Seyla Benhabib?

The Czechs are quite used to rich Americans and fat Germans coming to Prague for cheap beer etc. Since 1938, Czechs are also used to philo-Germans talking about them in their absence. In this context there is nothing unusual about this conference: (intellectual) managers of American (academic) oligopolies met in an exotic and cheap location to discuss their problems among themselves. But this is a group supposedly committed to Critical Theory, the public sphere and Habermasian communication theory. What happened here is a closure of the public sphere and the deliberate prevention of communication — an elimination of criticism from Critical Theory. One is left asking: how can such corruption of the critical ideal and the public sphere take place in the name of Critical Theory?

The answer is quite old, going back at least as far as Bakunin's critique of Marx. The *Jurassic Park* group made careers and fortunes from describing themselves as academically oppressed in academic oligopolies, achieving as a result managerial status. As the academic criticism of existing power structures coincided, especially in the US, with the successful political struggle against these power systems, the involved academics came to identify their *careers* with struggle for the public sphere. By comparison, East European intellectuals, no less critical of the power structures on their side of the old Iron Curtain, suffered as a result twenty years of persecutions, incarcerations, and exclusion from all jobs but the most manual. They never confused the *public* political and intellectual struggle with their personal professional or financial *success*. The confusion of some American academics between their own upward mobility, social justice and Critical Theory led them to close the public sphere and end criticism once they got their managerial tenure in one of the American academic oligopolies and achieved a powerful position within the academicpublishing industry-political institutional complex. Now they may embrace the new rhetoric of gender and race, to claim to continue to market their old shoddy merchandise as representatives of American politically organized and ascending groups. But, when it comes to other traditionally oppressed groups that are not politically organized and ascending, like children or the mad, or groups that do not have political power in America, like African *Africans*, Timorese in Indonesia, or illegal immigrants from Haiti, Latin America, or China, the oligopoly-managed public sphere closes. Then why should they want to listen to Czech intellectuals who spent twenty years in seclusion, have no property, and earn about 2% of the salary of comparable American academics?

It is sad, but the price for closing the public sphere and ending critical communication is stagnation, theoretical fossilization, and the ideologization of philosophy. The Dubrovnik papers of *Praxis International* began as an attempt to bridge East-West differences. Now, when political barriers have fallen, its

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Jurassic Park leadership erects new intellectual barriers. It is true that there are few if any Left-leaning intellectuals in East Central Europe. In Prague there were about three. Petr Uhl is still around. The other two got jobs in America. About the fate of Yugoslav "intellectuals" in the service of the neo-fascists there, I had better refrain from commenting. The fact of the matter is that if the *Praxis* people want to hear echoes of their own views coming back from the East, they had better shout from California to New York. The difference between East and West lies here exactly in social *praxis*. While the Americans were busy practicing the fine arts of tenure achievement, academic politics, and yuppie consumerism, their Eastern counterparts were practicing physical survival doing manual jobs (after the 1950s political prisoners were relatively few, and most dissidents worked as porters, nightwatchmen, chimney cleaners, stokers, street sweepers, water measurers, etc.), while developing their political and cultural practice in dissident communities. They could never institutionalize their cultural praxis, never confuse the "careers" they never had with their intellectual work. They could not exclude themselves from social life and practice, and consequently, though many of them considered themselves socialists during the 1960s and even the 70s, they had to adapt to the times and their experience. By contrast, their American counterparts were making their careers *outside* the mainstream of American life. While they had greater access to information than their Eastern counterparts, they did not have to rethink their 1960s opinions, and remained locked in amber, existing only in a private *Jurassic Park*.

A Czech philosopher, Bednar (who before the revolution was an anonymous *samizdat* writer and official office equipment salesman), described last year the first *Praxis* conference in Prague (in which only two Czech-based philosophers participated) in the weekly *Literarni Noviny* (Literary News).[1] While he acknowledged that they discussed important issues in political philosophy, he criticized the lectures as superficial and ideological, expressing the rhetoric of self-contented ideological all-knowers. Bednar regarded the *Praxis* group as continuing the Enlightenment-Marxist tradition of belief in rationality and progress as leading to a perfect world. This group reminded Bednar of communists in the 1980s who did not know how to adapt their old ideologies to the changing circumstances and instead adopted fresh empty slogans such as *perestroika* or *radical democracy*. The *Praxis* group appeared to Bednar anachronistic, "a central planning commission for human life," in contrast with Patocka or Heidegger's opaque philosophy. At the time, I thought he was wrong. Today, it is clear he was right.

Of course, it is possible that some of the things said in the conference were valuable, despite the absence of critical dialogue. Some or maybe even most of the participants did not take part in the decision to exclude Czech participants.

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1. Miloslav Bednar, "Filosofie politiky v soucasnem svete," *Literarni Noviny*, No. 23 (10/6/1993), p. 4.

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I did hear a few papers in the last "inferior" part of the conference, after the *Jurassic Park* academic oligopoly managers left, and they were not so bad. I liked a paper by Richard Wolin on the reactionary political background of Arendt's philosophy. But, then, as an amateur Czech, I was excluded, so I don't really know what happened in this conference . . . . On the other hand, I do know something about what happens in the Czech intellectual community. Despite mounting material problems, the scarcity of books, the inadequate salaries (a professor at the University of Prague earns about $200 per month, not enough for a living even considering the low cost of living there), I encountered more commitment and engagement than in any of the other places I travelled (except some of the better *Yeshivas*). The government policy here is to cut the budgets of institutes of higher learning. This is not all bad, because there are still many incompetent and nonproductive pseudo-intellectuals left from the communist era who should be laid off. Still, the number of students in the universities and in each faculty is determined by a government commission in advance and irrespective of demand. The number of places in humanities faculties is very limited. Due to this policy and Czech cultural attitude, admission to study in Prague's Charles University philosophy faculty is as difficult and as desired as admission to Yale Law School or Harvard's MBA program. Except for the George Soros-funded *Central European University*, which has only MA programs, there is no private higher education in the humanities (excluding languages). Further, Czechs are still not used to geographical mobility, hence there is a great concentration of intellectuals in Prague. Here the situation is similar to Paris in relation to France.

Due to this policy and the long tradition of dissidents becoming philosophers since they could do nothing else, every second person one meets in the semi-intellectual professional world (new civil servants, journalists, editors in publishing houses, gymnasium teachers, members of social sciences institutes and departments, religious leaders, etc.) declare themselves to be *really* philosophers or writers, and have some writings to attest to their vocation. Since university teachers are paid so poorly (even some high school teachers are paid better) and since so many intellectuals are surviving outside academia, nobody associates intellectual *life* with intellectual *career*. Of course the downside of this situation is the lack of time to concentrate on intellectual production, and lack of resources, especially books from the West, and ability to communicate with Western intellectuals. Nevertheless, Czech intellectuals did not and cannot loose touch with reality to the extent that some of their Western colleagues have. Czech cultural skepticism, irony, sarcasm, and the surviving phenomenological tradition make the Czechs natural critical theorists. Their experience of really existing socialism immunized them against *apparatchik* ideologies masquerading as philosophy. Some of the members of the *Praxis* group would have benefitted from this perspective, even Jean Cohen — maybe.

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Reviews

Beyond Left and Right

Norberto Bobbio, *Destra e Sinistra. Ragioni e Significati di una Distinzione Politica* (Rome: Donzelli Editori, 1994).

Norberto Bobbio is the philosopher of the liberal Italian Left. For some time, however, he has been paying attention to those who believe that the Left/Right opposition is no longer politically meaningful. In this concise work, he opens a dialogue with those who no longer believe in what might be called the Great Paradigm (i.e., the Right/Left dichotomy in politics). At the end, however, he concludes that that opposition still holds and attempts to demonstrate why one should side with the Left.

Because of its timely appearance, the book became an immediate best-seller in Italy during the recent election campaign, when the Right/Left opposition seemed as crucial as ever. Bobbio's argument is that being part of the Left entails a commitment to equality, while being part of the Right means backing a hierarchy, which is a form of inequality. Bobbio, however, carefully avoids claiming that Left policies increase *de facto* equality and goes as far as to admit that often the Left has created new forms of inequality. Thus he limits his analysis to basic principles, without dwelling on strategies, simply attempting to define the "essence" of Left and Right and not their concrete policies.

A Left philosopher once said that "to be on the Left is more difficult than to be on the Right because the Right does not betray, while the Left usually betrays and disappoints." In other words, the "existential" application of the Left's "essence" ends up betraying it. But can one take seriously an "essence" that cannot be realized in practice? Furthermore, is the difficulty (impossibility?) of implementing a certain program something foreign to this program's real essence? Does this difficulty not reveal its hidden truth?

As a boy, I asked my father (a life-long militant socialist) what it meant to be a socialist. He unhesitatingly responded: "It means being on the side of the weakest." Often there is more truth in responses to children than in most philosophical treatises. I further asked him what the basic difference was between Nenni (the leader of the Italian Socialist Party at the time) and Jesus. He answered: "Jesus was on the side of the weakest, but Nenni wants to take from the strong to give to the weak." In other words, Nenni was a Robin Hood. What

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is the difference between claiming that Nenni and Robin Hood were on the side of the weakest and that they wanted more equality?

France was recently thrown into turmoil by its youth allegedly in rebellion against Prime Minister Balladur's law, which proposed employment to recent graduates, but at wages only 80% of the legal minimum. Is that protest "Leftist" because the government is "Right," or because of its egalitarian import? The rebellion was against the idea that anyone, at the beginning of their career, should be paid 80% of the minimum wage. Balladur had promulgated this law in order to reduce high unemployment among the young. This attempt to reduce the unemployment was not anti-egalitarian, someone earning less than minimum wage is less unequal than someone earning nothing. One of the causes for the high unemployment in Europe is union guarantees for employees. Having created a protective veil around those employed, these guarantees discourage employers from hiring others, the result of which is a higher rate of unemployment. Protecting the weak often increases their weakness.

If the criteria is egalitarianism, the distinction between Right and Left "policies" becomes less evident because the real alternative in this case is not between more or less equality but between two types of inequality — between maintaining high wages for the employed (thus creating unemployment for part of the population), and reducing unemployment by lowering wages for the weaker sector of the employed. The Left sides with the young demonstrating in the streets, against the government's anti-unemployment policies.This is because the need to "be on the side of the weakest" prevails over rational ends "demanding more equality" — being on the side of the disadvantaged at any price, even if their demands are contradictory and do not contribute to resolving anything. If the Left was as rational as Bobbio, it would not side with the protesters but with Balladur. Unfortunately, today being Left or Right has nothing to do with rationality. Rather, it is a matter of historical legacy.

On the level of Bobbio's analysis, the difference between Right and Left is very sharp. The critique of Great Paradigm, however, has nothing to do with the explicit categorical imperatives of either side: no one objects to more equality as "an ideal." When the desire for more equality translates into "creating more equality," however, fundamental definitions lose their sharpness. Even if Bobbio were right and the Left's "essence" is a desire for more equality, the Left would still have to deal with other values (liberty, economic well-being, fraternity, etc). The same goes for the Right. Real people do not live only in one dimension. No political project can therefore be limited simply to "more equality," "more liberty" or "more green." It must also be clear about what priority it gives other values. When "more equality" is combined with other values (i.e., when abstract principles translate into concrete political decisions), things become less clear.

Bobbio avoids making value judgments. His descriptions, however, are influenced by his own preferences. For much of the Left, being on the Right is an indication of an evil nature, while being on the Left means "having a

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heart." After all, how could wanting to perpetuate inequality be considered anything but evil? Obviously, Left militants can be selfish and small-minded, while there are clearly altruistic and generous individuals on the Right. The Left explanation here is in terms of "self-deception" theory: a "good" person belongs to the Right only because of naiveté. But to charge adversaries with bad faith or stupidity or both is a cheap trick. Over time the Left has succeeded in creating suspicion concerning the wickedness of the Right. As a result, e.g., in Italy, with the exception of Fini's "National Alliance," no Italian political force explicitly identifies with the Right. On the other hand, the Right does not see the Left as "wicked" but as "unfair." For the Right, joining the Left is an envious revenge of the mediocre against the capable. After Clinton's victory, the following quip made the rounds of conservative circles: "Clinton would choose 'only' capable and competent persons as administrators, *even* white males." The Right is convinced that the Left, in the effort to level everything, does not judge on the basis of merit, and sees itself as the champion of liberty. Thus it is surprising that in the 1994 elections in Italy the Center-Right coalition called itself the "Pole of Liberty." *Soi disant* "progressives" on the Left deny that the liberty of the Right is true liberty, just as the Right denies that the Left is really "progressive." Expectedly, opposing poles reject their adversaries' definitions. Thus Bobbio's negative definition of the Right is clearly unacceptable.

Bobbio acknowledges that the Great Paradigm does not apply to the whole political arena: "There are liberal and authoritarian doctrines and movements on both the Right and the Left" (80). He proposes a quadripartite classification which combines two variables: Right/Left, on the one hand, and Liberal/Authoritarian, on the other. This leads him to identify an egalitarian and an authoritarian Left (Jacobin, Stalinist), an egalitarian and liberal Center/Left (liberal Socialism), a non-egalitalitarian and liberal Center/Right (liberal democracy) and a non-egalitarian and authoritarian Right (various forms of fascism). Here the strongest opposition would be between the Center and the Extremes.[1]

Bobbio discusses counter-examples which avoid the Left/Right opposition, e.g., Sorel, who admired both Mussolini and Lenin. That, however, may be the exception which proves the rule. Yet Italy — a country run for half a century by the Catholic Church and the Christian Democrats, political groups have always sought to avoid inclusion in the Great Paradigm. Wotylism was particularly successful in this: in moral and cultural values, John Paul II is ultra-conservative, while in socio-economic matters he advocates egalitarianism, fraternity and pacifism. Bobbio sees the Center as a side product of the Great

1. Bobbio also mentions that, besides liberty and equality, there are at least two other values (prosperity and peace) influencing politics. He does not, however, evoke the classical value of fraternity; perhaps because, even less than liberty, that value does not seem to fit the Great Paradigm. For fascism, fraternity is a national concept modeled on warrior camaraderie. Both socialist and Christian fraternity are universalist, although one is based on theology and the other on workers' solidarity.

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Paradigm — a point which confirms rather than threatens its distinction.[2] At any rate, he does a first-rate job in building his Procustean bed in order to fit into it the rich variety of both Left and Right. His analysis, however, is open to seven major objections: 1) not all political forces usually classified as Left can be identified with the demand for more equality; 2) in egalitarian movements and programs, other values such as liberty, justice, fraternity, peace, economic well-being, authenticity, emancipation, innovation, etc. are equally central; 3) if equality is reinterpreted as the precondition for the realization of other values, then the Right/Left opposition fades; those who "in principle" demand more equality may *de facto* accept anti-egalitarian measures to protect other equally important values; 4) if some measures meant to increase equality were implemented, they would result in paradoxical and "perverse" outcomes; these paradoxes deforming the Left/Right axis. (A pluralistic society renders problematic any linear policy simply attempting to adapt means to "absolute" ends. The means inevitably affect the ends); 5) from a pragmatic-rational viewpoint, the very concept of equality turns out to be polysemic — juridical and social equality are not the same; 6) political identities (not just those of the Great Paradigm) cannot be reduced to rational options beginning with well- defined values: they are complex and cannot be reduced to a single dimension; 7) the historical success of a paradigm must not discourage either criticism or modifications.

Non-Egalitarian Left Movements

The Greens' proposals, or libertarian ones, for example, cannot be seen as corollaries to Bobbio's call for "more equality." Green movements are concerned with general well-being, or "quality of life" issues, rather than with equality. The Greens accuse both rich and poor of polluting factories; of poisoning the environment. Bobbio quotes a call for more equality which associates it with the "quality of life," thus "ecologizing" the Left: "I cannot live well if others do not . . . I cannot feel that my life is 'decent' if the same fundamental conditions I enjoy are not guaranteed to others . . . . Equality is a component of the quality of life."[3] Here the trouble is that the Right also promises to improve the quality of life.

As for the anarchists, they broke with the Marxists at the time of the First International because they saw the authority of the state, rather than capitalism, as their main adversary. Libertarians are also against the state when it turns into a "social state" committed to redistributing wealth in a more equitable way. For

2. Many political groups define themselves as "the Center" in order to avoid the dictatorship of the Left/Right dichotomy. Christopher Lasch demonstrates how a great deal of the American political tradition was "populist" and outside the Great Paradigm in *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1991), This tradition was always hostile to the world of business and the capitalist market. However, it was also deeply conservative on cultural matters.

3. Massimo Cacciari, "Dialoghetto sulla 'Sinisteritas'," in *Micromega* 4 (1993), p. 15.

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libertarians the demand for freedom prevails over the need for equality. The difference between libertarianism and liberal socialism cannot be reduced to a disagreement over means which have common ends. The liberals' liberty is different from the libertarian's.

Many movements calling for more equality do not consider themselves Left. Many religious integralisms, including some varieties of Koumhenism, call for more equality. What distinguishes them from the Left, however, is their rejection of bourgeois and "secularized" individualistic values. Although these movements could be classified as culturally on the Right, the axis along which they are distributed is, for the most part, one of traditionalism/emancipation. It is not by chance that the amusing label of "far Center" was occasionally applied to Italian Catholic Fundamentalists. Similarly, Peronist *justicialism* was also explicitly egalitarian, although it had nothing to do with Left culture. The same goes for Ireland's IRA, the Arab Baath Party, etc.

On the other hand, there is a Left culture which extends beyond its egalitarian programs. Consider abortion. Left movements are usually pro-abortion. Movements against it are often on the Right. In this case, however, the Left tends to emphasize the liberty and emancipation of women more than equality. To be consistent, in terms of Bobbio's (and my father's) definitions, the Left should be against abortion, as the fetus is unquestionably weaker than the mother. In this context, it is the pro-lifers who are on the side of the weakest. Usually very sensitive to the rights of the handicapped, the retarded, the mentally ill, children, and even animals, the Left here appears insensitive to the rights of the unborn. At any rate, why should the rights of women prevail over the rights of the unborn child?[4]

Other Fundamental Left Values

It might be interesting to ask communist theoreticians whether they would accept Bobbio's definition. For young committed communists, such as I myself once was, liberty is equally important. For decades, Sartre's works have been extremely influential for Left intellectuals, and his philosophy is based more on a radical concept of unlimited liberty than on egalitarianism. For communists, liberty means being free "from" competition, being able to satisfy one's needs and express one's individuality, without having to overcome

4. Bobbio's answer is the following: "[The unborn child] is certainly the weaker of the two; however, the woman is weaker than the male who forced her, at least in the majority of cases, to become pregnant" (15). This will not do, because it applies only to those cases in which the woman becomes pregnant following physical coercion — one of the few conditions which even many conservatives are willing to accept as a legitimate justification for aborting. Yet, when feminists demand the right to abort, they are very careful not to limit the issue to cases of male abuse. The ideal of equality does not seem to be very relevant here. "Pro-choice" movements seek to emancipate women, but what is actually sought is increased women's autonomy. This emancipation does not necessarily imply more equality.

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excessive obstacles because of poverty or censorship. This liberty is different from what liberals mean. While the latter wish to be free *to have* more, the anti-authoritarian communists want to be free in order *to be* more. Of course, this liberty to satisfy both basic as well as creative needs should be available to all. Thus what is most distressing about the workers' predicament is not so much their low wages but the fact that they are forced to spend their lives at boring and brutalizing jobs in order to survive. They should also have been free like Bobbio to enjoy Godard's films. Of course, Marx was right in claiming that this lack of liberty is connected to inequalities created by capitalism. Thus workers should have higher wages, but for communist intellectuals that demand for material equality is a means rather than an end.

Incompatible Values

The relation between equality and justice is not always clear. Except for some fringe movements such as, e.g., the Levellers, there is practically no Left movement calling for absolute equality. In the early days of the Russian Revolution, there were attempts at radical egalitarianism: everyone received the same wage. However, it became immediately clear that egalitarianism was unfair: individuals who worked themselves to death received the same compensation as the idlers. The Left allowed for unequal compensation, but demanded that these inequalities be fair. Bobbio's definition, in fact, should be modified as follows: "one is Left *only* if one allows for just inequality." But *when* and *where* is inequality just? Nothing is more problematic. Is it unfair for entrepreneurs to earn twenty times more than workers? Ten times more? Twice as much?

During the 1970s, the Left was seduced by John Rawls' theory of justice.[5] In the 1980's Italian Communist Party posters were full of terms such as "justice" and "fairness." Rawls attempted to overcome the conflict between "more equality" and "more economic well-being." Allegedly, a society was just when inequalities were justified by the need to raise the level of the living conditions "first and foremost" of the weakest components of society. Rawls' and Bobbio's rational reconstructions satisfy some of those intellectual demands, but *only* intellectual ones. Rawls provides no yardstick for measuring the fairness of any specific inequality.[6]

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5. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

6. In a private conversation, Bobbio stated that justice is linked to the satisfaction of needs. In a hospital or in a charitable institution, the administration rightly provides everyone according to their needs. The original model of "satisfying needs," however, is family life rather than hospitals or senior citizens' centers. But can one say that a mother cares for her child through a sense of justice? Mothers nurse out of love and not because babies "deserve" it. Should the child be left an orphan, can the state's care be considered justice? In this case, the state recognizes the citizen's right to survive. Yet this right can also be acknowledged by someone on the Right. Does it make any difference that the Right helps the weak or the needy "for the sake of charity," while the Left

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On the one hand, the Left justifies inequality if it can be considered just, while on the other it claims more equality in the name of justice. It would be just to give to each according to their needs, not according to their merit: yet it has been already established that giving to each according to their merit is just. At any rate, on the level of elementary principles, here the Left must accept a principle of the Right: meritocracy.

Every definition of principles cannot ignore the fact that all societies — even primitive tribes in Borneo or Hoxha's Albania — have some hierarchy. At most, Left and Right can prefer one type of hierarchy over another. Today, liberal-democratic societies base their hierarchies on "merit" and on heritage. Thus, e.g., in Italy Berlusconi's power is a result of his entrepreneurial skills, while Agnelli's (the owner of Fiat) on his heritage (he is the scion of a wealthy family). To the extent that the Left insists on rewarding merit rather than heritage, it accepts the Right's ideology. Of course, the Right and the Left do not agree about what to reward as "merit." Thus the libertarian Right values mostly market skills, while other types of Right place non-market figures such as priests, pastors or army generals high in the hierarchy. The divergence about criteria of "merit" between Right and Left is not reducible to a disagreement about equality, as Bobbio claims. Both Right and Left accept inequality: their disagreement is about *whom* ought to be given privileges. Thus today the Left tends to spread privileges to avant-garde and élitist artists, while the Right prefers representatives of the old moral order.

Everything becomes more complicated, however, with the realization that, in order to give to each according to their needs, first wealth must be produced. Usually the Left does not just promise more equality, i.e., the elimination of unjust forms of inequality. It also claims that more equality will lead to more general economic well-being. This has not turned out to be the case. Castro's Cuba is much more egalitarian than countries with market economies. What it distributes equitably, however, is poverty. At the end of this century the lesson of communism is this: the market remains the best means for producing more wealth. This was not clear a century ago, before some countries had actually tried socialism. Of course, it had been foreseen, but proof of that is available only now. Russians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cubans, Koreans, Albanians, etc., have been the guinea pigs for this vast historical experiment.[7]

Here the paradox is the following: in order to really help those in need (because

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does so "through a spirit of justice"? That difference between justice and charity is problematic. Here the Left's justice seems to be a mere rationalization of *caritas*. (In the Middle Ages, "*caritas*" meant non-sensual love: the love of God, of our fellow man, of the Church.) Does being on the Left mean wanting to do "good" without love?

7. Visceral anti-communism has always been short-sighted: it was important that socialism be tested to reveal its inherent short-comings. Of course, true believers will continue to claim that a "real socialism" which will defeat capitalism has not yet been given a chance. And there will be other attempts at communism. The revolutionary dream is too seductive to be discouraged forever by a few historical failures.

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of Christian brotherhood, socialist justice, or conservative charity) society needs the marketplace: competition. However, the foundations of the market are the mechanisms of supply and demand, not the principle of satisfying the needs of all. The market is organized along the lines of sports events: some win and some lose. The market produces more wealth than any socialism, through the "Darwinian" elimination of the least fit and the rewarding of the fittest, i.e., the strongest. Social democracies attempted to combine the two: the accumulation of wealth "by the Right" through the market, and the subsequent redistribution "by the Left," on the basis of needs In some of the wealthier countries permeated with Lutheran morality, such as Sweden, it worked for a while. Yet the tension between merit and need remains, because although the process of accumulating and redistributing wealth is distinct, in life they usually merge. If two shoe factories are in competition, one will fail and its workers will end up unemployed. However, if a socialist government goes on paying the wages of the unemployed workers of the failed factory, it will also indirectly interfere in production. The workers will inevitably come to the conclusion that it is foolish to kill themselves working to beat the competition when the unemployed take home almost the same pay they do. In addition, to help the workers of the factory eliminated by competition, the successful entrepreneur must be taxed, with the result that he is prevented from profiting from his own success, which could cause him to transfer his investment abroad. In other words, in a non-linear social system the redistribution of wealth (based on need) continuously interferes with accumulation.

On the other hand, the liberal Right's (not the culturally conservative Right) pure market situation with minimum state control leads to paradoxical results. Left to itself, pure competition tends to destroy the market. By gradually eliminating all competition, the winner becomes a monopoly, which is the end of the market. Therefore, in order to avoid destroying the market, the Right has adopted a series of Left "egalitarian" measures such as social security, welfare, etc. (As John K. Galbraith put it: "A society must be progressive if it is to be conservative"). Interpreted by the Left as the protection of the needy, these measures take on a different meaning: they are the means of re-inserting individuals into the competitive process. (Obviously, competition also applies to workers.) Thus the "social state" prevents entropy. The market tends to devour itself if the system remains closed. However, by throwing the "failures" back into the fray, the state keeps the system open, feeding the market and preventing the eventual monopoly of the strongest: i.e., entropy. In other words, both a purely Left program and a purely liberal free market would lead to catastrophe, i.e., a general entropy, by destroying diversity and competition.

Today in Italy the concept on "alternation" is very popular. Yet the alternation of power between Right and Left parties proves one thing: after a time the electorate becomes discontent with any government they have elected and switch to the opposition. Alternation is therefore also proof of the fragility of social-democratic societies: any political force turns out to be unable to resolve

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systemic problems. Thus, like a pendulum, the nation must forever oscillate between the two poles. This means that the system will never overcome its own contradictions, and therefore will go first in one direction and then in the other. Contrary to what Marx believed, however, the impossibility of resolving this contradiction constitutes a source of vitality for the system as a whole.

Is the Western dilemma, then, to distribute less wealth in a more egalitarian way, or to accept inequality in order to accumulate more wealth? Neither Left nor Right acknowledges this dilemma, as they both nurture the illusion that production and distribution are independent of each other. The Left is blind to the fact that, by increasing equality they risk impoverishing society as a whole, while the Right does not realize that the progressive elimination of competitors ends up impoverishing society as a whole. Thus alternation explodes the myth of Left/Right opposition, revealing their interdependence. This is why in liberal-democratic societies the center usually wins, resulting in an alternation of similar forces.

Paradoxes of Egalitarian Politics

Growing skepticism concerning the Great Paradigm can be attributed to the questioning of the assumption that in human actions intentions correspond to concrete consequences. The conviction that one should be either more to the Right or more to the Left presupposes the linearity of human actions — a project can be realized once the adequate means are found. Confronted with the fact that most Left governments in the world have succeeded in bringing about little equality, the Left usually responds that the project remains, only the methods have been inadequate. Today the transparency assumed by all classical thought between cause and effect has disappeared. A well-meaning action no longer necessarily entails the desired effect, and vice-versa. Consider the well-known example of the island, where the number of foxes and hares fluctuates. The hares are eaten by the foxes until their number is drastically reduced, at which point the foxes, deprived of their nourishment, are decimated by hunger. The decrease in the number of foxes then makes possible a new proliferation of hares, consequently making available a new food supply for the foxes, which begin to flourish once again.

In society, the Left sides with the "hares" by calling for the elimination of the "foxes." In such a situation, however, the hares would reproduce out of all proportion, and soon food would become scarce once again. A fierce struggle for food would develop among the swollen population of hares, with the result that the more clever would survive while the rest die of hunger. In other words, the foxes' traditionally lethal role would have been assumed by the hare population itself in an increasingly tough competition for decreasing resources. The conclusion is a bitter one: some of the hares must inevitably succumb, the only problem is deciding which. In fact, the individual qualities necessary for the hare to escape the clever fox are different than those needed to prevail over other hares in competing for food. The Left "hares" have ultimately failed to come to the

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aid of the weak: they have simply redefined the weak and the strong. In other words, it has become evident that any political decision has its price. Consequently, it is necessary to decide who is the weakest, i.e., those with whom the next "Left" will take sides.

Consider once again the recent youth rebellion in France. Those young rebels were not so stupid as to be unaware of the fact that, if a reform aimed at lowering unemployment failed, they will have what they have now: unemployment and not more equality. Yet they appear to prefer the present predicament, and this "conservative" choice is considered "Left." This is because it is easier to accept something dreadful whose causes are anonymous, than the same thing resulting from conscious political decision. This has to do with the need to maintain a linear paradigm, according to which "responsibility" can be easily established. The French youth thought it was protesting against a conservative government; instead, it was protesting in favor of a more fundamental conservatism preserving the "linear political paradigm" according to which one social event should be explained in terms of one social agent.

The more radical Left rejects the idea that the weak should *always* be assisted: its goal is a society in which the weak would be capable of fending for themselves. Systematic aid to the weaker elements does not emancipate them, but renders them permanently dependent. The Right sees something deeply "adolescent" in the Left's attempt to achieve collective emancipation since the road to emancipation can be only an individual one. In other words, the dividing line between Right and Left is not between emancipating the weak or keeping them under tutelage. The Left sees emancipation as the result of collective action and the Right as the result of individual efforts.

The Many Meanings of Equality

Bobbio assumes that concepts such as "freedom," "equality," "economic well-being," etc. are not equivocal, and that their meaning transcends particular political ideologies. This is questionable. The meaning of a term depends on the conceptual framework of the individuals who use it. Such concepts are part of a way of life. Often political ideologies exploit the *incommensurability* of concepts as they are used within various ethical-political systems. Bobbio cites Article 3 of the Italian Constitution as an illustration of what the Left has traditionally pursued: "All citizens are socially equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, individual and social condition." He admits that the Right accepts Article 3, but only reluctantly. Here he falls into the typical mistake of Left political thought.

The Left sees juridical equality ("the law is equal for all") and political equality ("one man, one vote") as the first step toward social equality and economic democracy. For part of the Left, industrial capitalism and representative democracy are only the beginning of a process leading to non-competitive equality. Actually, today political democracy translates into the rule of the market over the economy. Modern capitalism is based on competition at all

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levels (political, economic and cultural). In this context, equality of rights does not compensate for inequality but generates it. As Dahrendorf put it, equality *before the law* does not level out differences but creates them.[8] Inequality is unavoidable. All societies have laws and rules of behavior. Those conforming to these laws are rewarded, while those failing to do so are penalized, even if often indirectly. ". . . [W]e may say that the law is both a necessary and a sufficient condition of social inequality. There is inequality because there is law; if there is law, there must also be inequality among men"[9] Precisely because men are equal *before the law* they are unequal *after the law*. Because it is universally applicable, every law results in a stratification of individuals. This is because every law privileges certain human characteristics over others. This is why democracy does not produce more equality but, left to itself, generates inequality.

For the Right, the "equality before the law" mandated by Article 3 implies no *de facto* equality. It only means that being *equal before the law of universal competition is necessary in order to be unequal after competition*. Modern society is "progressive" because it continues to produce differences, gaps, inequalities, imbalances, not despite juridical equality (before the law) but due to a regulated exploitation of juridical equality. As Lévi-Strauss put it, liberal-democracies are like thermodynamic machines in that they produce differences in potential. Conversely, archaic societies function more or less like homeostatic machines and tend to establish balances, not differences.[10] Inequality is the propellent of progress. Thus progress and equality are contradictory.

Political Identities

Bobbio belongs to that genre of philosophers who seek to reveal the rational order underlying that great muddle which is social and political life. The Left has said and done just about everything: from defending individual rights to supporting the worst dictatorships, it has sung the praise of workers but just as often it has shot them, it has defended peasants but also it has occasionally exterminated them, etc. The rationalist philosopher always manages to find some meaning in this mess. From the melange of languages and political views of people in flesh and blood, he will extract the rational paradigm secretely structuring the whole. Although Left activists may at times feel lost in the labyrinth, they can sleep in peace because Bobbio and other lucid minds think for them

8. Ralf Dahrendorf, "On the Origin of Inequality among Men," in *Essays in the Theory of Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 151-78.

9. See Dahrendorf's essay in André Béteille, ed., *Social Inequality* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1969), p. 34.

10. In exemplifying the difference between the two types of society, Lévi-Strauss, cites a New Guinea tribe, the members of which had learned to play soccer. Their game, however, consisted in having two rival tribes play until a draw was achieved, unlike competitions in the West, which begin with a draw in order to establish the difference between winners and losers. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage* (Plon: Paris 1962), p. 30.

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and will show how, when all is said and done, what they do has meaning.

During this century, rationalists have done everything possible to reduce human language to a rational instrument. They have failed to do so, because language is not mere rationality: there have been grafts, borrowings, historical sedimentations, passing fancies and chance catastrophes incorporated into its structure. Even in political choice, rationality is not the only basis. Contrary to what Bobbio claims, being Right or Left (but also being Christian or secular, authoritarian or liberal, permissive or repressive, etc.) has to do primarily with belonging to an ethnic group.

Obviously, for those on the Left, it is enough to glance through the newspaper to place immediately the facts of the day in relation to the Great Paradigm The rule is to judge the world, distinguishing Good and Evil. This is done by using something similar to a language. It is not a matter of proceeding by inference, starting from general principles, but by reacting to the world according to conditioned reflexes. Many people are trained from infancy to judge politically (whether Right, Left, or other) by their parents. From infancy, in a Left-wing environment, the individual becomes used to feeling antipathy for priests, tradesmen, the military and the rich, and sympathy for the poor, manual workers and avant-garde intellectuals. The adult takes that conditioning for logical consistency. Political identity is not so much choice as something to which one belongs. *Ethnicity* denotes precisely that belonging, that being part of a tradition (having inherited a series of ethical-cultural reflexes) is a collage which constitutes "identity." On closer analysis, what appeared to be an inflexible *Gestalt* — the essence of belonging to the Left or to the Right — turns out to be a collection of heterogeneous elements.

Beyond Predominant Paradigms

Bobbio argues that the Left/Right opposition must be retained as long as politicians and public opinion still use it. In fact, politics are far more nominalistic than most philosophers are willing to admit. Yet Bobbio himself admits the existence of other differences according to which social debate could be interpreted. Every now and then there have been important innovations in political thought. The importance of thinkers such as Plato, Machiavelli and Rousseau is not due to their rationalization of those dominant paradigms which the intelligentsia of their times associated with the political situation, but in the new paradigms they produced and which successive generations partly adopted. It is the unyielding nominalistic dimension which no rationalism will ever succeed in cancelling from the political sphere.

Sergio Benvenuto

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Radical Philosophy or New Class Ideology?

Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *Radical Philosophy: Tradition, Counter-Tradition, Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 288 pp.

Once upon a time there were religion, poetry, ethics, politics, philosophy, law, science, history and many other disciplines. Now there is just politics: everything is political![1] This is the implicit assumption of the writers of this anthology, explicitly defended in one of its essays. It is a posture which mars many of the insights scattered throughout the book. It is foundationalism with a vengeance. It is not, however, one that would make such foundationalists as Aristotelians, Scotists, or Hegelians rest comfortably, for it is a shifting foundation. One of the authors, Frank Cunningham, draws a distinction between philosophy and politics — "a distinction with a difference" — when he speaks of philosophy as an adjunct to "movement politics" and "to the work of other theorists" (210). But he says this after denying that he can distinguish between "philosophical and non-philosophical theoretical labor" (210).

No wonder the two self-appointed supervisors of sex and sexual harassment, Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, fail to grasp the nature of love (at least in what they say publicly). According to Edwin De Lattre, their views, based on the claim that everything is political, especially the personal, mean that heterosexual intercourse is just male oppression and indistinguishable from rape. They also mean that "victims' reports of rape" and "women's reports of sex". . . look very much alike. From the viewpoint of the authors of this anthology, how should concern for and appeal to justice (social or otherwise) be regarded if "all is political."? They can only be either empty ap peals or disguised grasps for power. The same is true of oppression. It would have been much easier simply to drop so shaky an absolute as "all is political."

In a traditional way, Roger Gottlieb, the editor, begins with a dedication and an explanation of his title *Radical Philosophy: Tradition, Counter-Tradition, Politics*. The dedication is not a mere inscription: it is the book's preface. The first sentence states that "[t]he authors of this volume are deeply pleased to dedicate it to

1. The claim that "everything is political" is destructive of one of the most important of human qualities, love, which, understood in the political sense of the authors of this anthology, becomes nothing but domination. Sex and biology are also reduced to mere mechanical instruments of war. As De Lattre points out, "[i]f everything is political, then the words 'I love you' can never be true." No one, he says, could "understand and mean the words when said to a spouse, a child, a friend, 'I love you'." Nor would it be possible to tell them: "Your welfare, your happiness, your life, mean more to me than my own." See Edwin De Lattre, "Pushing Against the Age," in *Bostonia* (Spring, 1994), p. 39.

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Richard Schmitt: professor of philosophy at Brown University, long-time radical activist, comrade, colleague and inspiring friend to us all" (IX). Why Richard Schmitt is a sacred person is due to the fact that, "from his own personal experiences as a Jew, a refugee from Nazi Germany, an immigrant, a leftist, and a feminist, he is keenly aware of the feelings of humiliation and powerlessness experienced by those outside established positions of authority. This awareness fuels his persistent struggle for respectful, egalitarian relations with women, with students, with people of color, and with all disenfranchised groups" (X). In other words, this Ivy-League philosophy professor is a model of Political Correctness. However, as one of the better essays in the book points out, "not all suffering is exemplary. Not all of it is representative of important facts about human life" (227).[2]

According to Gottlieb, "radical philosophy" refers to "a collective body of work produced since the late 1960s by academic philosophers seeking to use their intellectual training and professional positions in the service of radical political, social, economic, and cultural change" (1). These philosophers are "part of the tradition even as they rail against it" (4). This means that the history of philosophy bespeaks the perennially critical facet of philosophical work: philosophers evaluate and judge what other philosophers write. The difference between radical and other philosophers, however, is that the former "have lost their innocence" (4). They "take as given a social and personal identity on the part of both the speaker and the listener — of both the critic and the tradition itself. Those identities are rooted in relations of power, domination, exclusion and exploitation; and in *systems* of capitalism, imperialism, homophobia, and the destructions of nature" (4).

The claim that radical philosophers have "lost their innocence" is both self-congratulatory and patronizing. It implies that traditional philosophers are innocent or naive (i.e., ignorant). In a moment of relative lucidity, Gottlieb admits that "[m]ost of us came of age in the 1960s when a dramatically different and better world seemed to be something we could create in the near future. Naive, intolerant, and self-important (the young and passionate often are), we developed our philosophical skills at the same time that we developed our philosophical radicalism" (12). This self-consciousness would be more complete if radical philosophers recognized that they have not changed much since their youth and are still trying to push people around in their still urgent quest "to change the world" (12).

The criticism of traditional philosophers and the desire for power to recreate the world seem traditional enough. If, however, radical philosophers regard

2. The focus of Elizabeth Spelman's "Slavery and Tragedy" is Aristotle's dismissal of the suffering of slaves as the proper stuff of tragedy or of being worthy of notice (231-232) and of slavery as the American tragedy. Yet she also thinks that Richard Schmitt, and *a fortiori* his suffering, is inspiring (240), whatever her views of and feelings for white males in general may otherwise be.

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themselves as "ambivalent heirs" of the dominant tradition, they think of themselves less ambivalently as a *Counter-tradition* (5). "It is this counter-tradition that provides the basic theoretical presuppositions, terms of reference, and values for radicals — and that helps differentiate the radical philosophy of the present from earlier manifestations of philosophical criticism" (5-6). Gottlieb sees the counter-tradition beginning with Marx, "despite the many limitations of his thought" and its "'definitive' refutations." Gottlieb alludes then to Jean-Paul Sartre's suggestion that "there will be no dispensing with Marxism until capitalism disappears. *In a sense,* all radicals are Marxists" (6). A political opportunist, Sartre wrote this in the 1950s, when communism was still relatively strong. Would he claim the same today, after the collapse of the Soviet Union? Interestingly enough, since 1989 radicals in Europe and elsewhere have been shedding Marxism as fast as possible. It no longer seems to be the winning side. At any rate, it is plain nonsense to claim that all radicals are really Marxists.

According to Gottlieb, "Marx's vision of a classless society of shared power, collective concern, and personal self-realization provides a starting (though clearly not a concluding) point for most radical visions of a better world" (6). But if such is the case, what is the point of arrival? What Gottlieb takes to be the starting point seems to be what Marx thought of as the point of arrival — a classless society. What Gottlieb means can be found in the claim that "[w]ith the advent of feminist, antiracist, and ecological perspectives, the notion that one single social structure — class — could serve as the basis of analysis and social change was swept away" (9). The implication here is that race, sex, and natural differences are also to be eliminated. From some corners of the movement such ideas have already been proposed and even tried. But if "equality" remains the point of arrival, is this not a return to "class" as the basic notion of analysis?

Gottlieb rejects the positivist identification of science with objective truth. His arguments, however, are unconvincing. He appeals to the Frankfurt School for a criticism of Western science and technology. He also emphasizes the mistake of positivism in making science and technology the models for rational thought and action. He then says: "[w]e now seek talk by a multiplicity of subjects, in a multiplicity of styles, theoretical vocabularies and pragmatic concerns, and no longer search for one centralized, central, univocal source of truth" (10). His point is that there are truths and not just "scientific" truths in the positivist sense. He seems to forget that the meaning of truth itself must be *univocal* in order to recognize the many truths. "If," he asks, "science does not provide us with the sole objective knowledge of reality, what — if anything — does?" (9). "[I]n the absence of any normative or categorical justification of knowledge, of the very concept of or formula for objectivity, our ideal of rational human discourse is radically altered" (9-10).

Rejecting the positivists' scientism, however, does not entail abandoning objectivity and embracing relativism. The latter would make it impossible to practice the sort of deconstruction "in which the history of philosophy is read as

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the continual suppression of marginalized voices by internally incoherent attempts to achieve linguistic and conceptual domination" (10). Doing so requires a recognition of the suppression as such, i.e., objective knowledge of it. Furthermore, if there is no objective knowledge, how could one estimate the Marxist feminist analysis of "environmental degradation as consequences of capitalist or male domination"? (11). It would be impossible even to establish that such an opinion was mistaken. The abandonment of objective knowledge also leads to disinformation, as when Gottlieb triumphantly states "Given the way the democratic forces have swept away the corrupt and totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe, the notion of democracy is essential to an end to exploitation" (11). He forgets to add that those corrupt and totalitarian regimes were not only Marxist but constructed "really existing Marxism."[3]

In the very first essay, Ann Ferguson asks "Does Reason Have a Gender?" The answer "can only be yes (it has had) but No (it needn't)!" (22). Between the question and the answer, she provides a summary of traditional Western (therefore patriarchical and misogynist) accounts of reason along with some feminist (therefore just and valid) criticisms of those accounts: "Tradition," it becomes clear from "the first essay to the fourth is a mere foil, a straw man for the counter-tradition." According to Ferguson, "Western philosophers who have discussed the social roles for men and women (1) maintain a kind of philosophical dualism, (2) justify a sexual division of labor in the economy and in the family and (3) assume an essential difference between men's and women's natures" (21). It is no accident that she ends it with a sermon which (1) urges women to develop "women-bonding through feminist networks" so as "to revalue the positive skills associated with femininity while finding ways to overcome aspects of that role," (2) "redefine male bonding . . . in alliance with feminist goals" and (3) attacks "homophobia, racism, classism, and ethnicism as well as economic power structures that prevent the breakdown of the sexual division of wage, community, and home labor." If this sermon is not an exercise in the banalities of therapeutic-sensitivity culture, then it reads like a pep-talk of the attitude police at a rally. Is this what the Left has come to? Is this the way it makes the world tremble with awe as it did at the beginning of the century? What the book exemplifies is a pursuit of farce beyond parody.[4]

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3. Traditional too is Gottlieb's structure. While it may be merely accidental, the book is divided by the numbers three and twelve. There are three parts entitled Tradition, Counter-Tradition, Politics, and twelve chapters, each written by a radical philosopher. Three, of course, is the number of the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic, Peirce's triadic logic and of their inspiration, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. It is the number of completeness. Whether or not the editor and authors thought they were uttering, if not the final word, but the latest word on tradition, counter-tradition, and politics, the use of the tripartite structure is noteworthy. But does "politics" or "history" really synthesize the opposition of tradition and counter-tradition? Twelve is the biblical number that signifies totality or universality as in the twelve tribes of Israel or the twelve Apostles. The use of "twelve," however, may be merely accidental.

4. Whatever is interesting in Ferguson's arguments is marred by her mawkishness.

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In the second essay, "Ethnocentrism in Grand Theory," Linda Nicholson announces that she is a Marxist, feminist, and semi-postmodern. The common thread that unites her enthusiasm, she says, "is a hostility to the grandiosity and false claims to universality of liberal social theory and philosophy" (48). To make her point, she examines three cases: Locke, Marx, and contemporary feminists. Locke's failed claims to grandiosity and universality are found to be due to his lack of historical self-consciousness. He fails to understand that his doctrines are shaped by his own time, class, and gender (50-51). While conscious of the "historicity" of social doctrine, Marx, no less than Locke, believed his social doctrine to be transhistorical (51-52). Although contemporary feminists are "sensitive" to the "ethnocentrism" of social theory, they too are caught in the historical trap — the trap of late 20th century Western middle-class concepts such as "family," "mothering," "sexuality" (54). According to Nicholson, this root failure in all the cases is a dependence on biological foundationalism to explain and justify social life, thereby undermining social constructionist theories. Only the latter can avoid the false generalization of the grandiose and ethnocentric theories of Western thought.

Nicholson is so eager to deny that "biology is destiny" that she becomes vulnerable to a false generalization of her own. Is biology nothing? Does she mean that? If it is something in the calculus of social life, then she needs to say what that something is. She does not do so. She concludes with an admonition from Marx on tradition, which she appears to take as a marching order for the creation of a new world: "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (63).

Linda Alcoff's essay, "How is Epistemology Political," is the explicit defense of a necessary connection of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, and politics. Calling upon witnesses such as Lyotard, Foucault, Harding and Longino for testimony that epistemology is political (83), she attempts to establish her case on the following grounds: (1) "[T]he conditions for the production of epistemologies are political in the sense that these conditions reflect social hierarchies of power and privilege to determine who can participate in epistemological discussions and whose views on epistemology have the potential to gain wide influence"; (2) "[S]pecific theories of knowledge produced by

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Sentences like the following do not help her case. "All the characteristics of reason that have been offered by malestream [sic] philosophers — such as logical argument, ability to abstract general principles, autonomy and independent thought free of tradition and religious orthodoxy, and instrumental decisions to advance one's own self-interests in opposition to others (the rational self-interested agent of bourgeois Enlightenment thought) can be seen to be associated in the past with men because of the sexual and social division of labor that created the material conditions for certain men to develop these skills and outlooks on life" (39). "I dedicate this essay to Richard Schmitt, an old friend from Marxist Activist Philosophers (MAP) and Socialist and Feminist Philosophers in Action (SOFPHIA) with whom I have had many helpful discussions about structures of patriarchy. Richard is a wonderful example of a gender traitor . . . . who in his philosophy and his personal practice is working to challenge male dominance" (40).

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epistemologists reflect the social locatedness [sic] of the particular theorists"; (3) "[E]pistemologies have political effects insofar as they are discursive interventions in specific discursive and political spaces. Thus certain theories of justification will have the effect of authorizing or disauthorizing certain kinds of voices and may legitimate or delegitimate given discursive hierarchies and arrangements of speaking" (66).

These claims require the kind of detailed evaluation beyond the space constraints of a review. Suffice to say that the most Alcoff can claim about epistemology being the preserve of privileged white males (67) is that this is the way it has always been. This is merely the relative necessity of fact and does not entail either logical or ontological necessity. In other words, it could have been otherwise. The fact that it is now otherwise disqualifies any claim of logical or ontological necessity. She as well as female epistemologists such as Harding and Irigaray, or epistemologists who are women such as Arendt, Hartle, and Sommers, undermine the credibility of her claims, as do such Black philosophers as West and Appiah or such philosophers who are Black as Martinez and Russell. And all this has taken place within patriarchy.

Nowhere does Alcoff make a case for the *identity* of epistemology and politics. All she argues is that epistemology affects or influences politics. Few would challenge this. Her own argument is epistemological, i.e., it is an attempt to say something about the nature of epistemology. The statement itself — "epistemology is political" — is epistemological and not political. From it, however, she wishes to recommend the following policies: (1) "Epistemologists [should] be chosen or selected not by unfair privilege and prejudice or by economic and discursive advantage[?], but by merit, aptitude, and interest." But who is to do the selecting? A committee of epistemologists? A committee of radical epistemologists? (2) "A form of affirmative action [is needed] for the judgment and development of new work in epistemology. . . . Like affirmative action programs in general, such an affirmative action would be based not on the argument that work of an inferior quality should be accepted in order to increase inclusiveness, but on the idea that quality itself is in part a political determination." This sounds like the New Age network, or like "helping friends and harming enemies." So much for the new reign of justice. (3) "On political grounds, if, for example, one has a commitment to maximize discursive democracy as far as possible, or the ability and right of as many people to speak and be given credibility as possible, then one will want to know how a given theory of epistemic justification will contribute to that project." Such is the program of the "new" epistemology. It will seek to eliminate from epistemology not the influence of "politics per se" but the influence of "oppressive politics" (79). But how can this happen if epistemology *is* politics. What would the criterion be for distinguishing between oppressive and non-oppressive politics.

The criterion cannot be political. It must transcend politics. Could the criterion be moral? Would that moral criterion be bound to its own time or would it be transhistorical? Alcoff does not even ask the questions. But she

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does say that "philosophy in general and epistemology in particular need a major overhaul." She urges a greater self-consciousness of the "machinations of power and desire . . . in both our theories and our research agenda." Then, in blissful irony, not to say self-contradiction, she says she believes "like the theorists of the Frankfurt School, . . . that the present era needs reflective thinking more than ever, and needs a space where thinking can occur outside the dynamics of commodity production and the demand for instrumental usefulness toward the maintenance of this system (or as much outside as possible), and outside a closed set of prescribed questions deemed fruitful for social maintenance" (82). In other words, she longs for epistemology to be epistemology — free not only from patriarchical capitalism but from politics itself.

Amelie Oksenberg Rorty's essay, "Varieties of Moral Conflict, Variety of Resolutions," does not really fit in with the rest of the contributions. It lacks their overt ideological posture as well as their philosophical style. It seems more appropriate for an anthology of contemporary analytic moral philosophy. She neither cites nor quotes the philosophers so dear to the other authors, although she does acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Richard Schmitt for conversations over the years and to Tom Wartenberg, another author included in this anthology, for his good counsel. The essay is found in the section on tradition because it proposes to be anti-foundationalist in ethics (foundationalism being characteristic of "the tradition," i.e., the Western tradition). In the introduction, Gottlieb states that Rorty develops "a feminist influenced account" and "furthers the contributions of feminist ethics in its emphasis on the particularity of the situation of the moral agent" (5). There is nothing especially feminist in her account, nor is the emphasis on the particularity of the situation of the moral agent as an exclusive concern of feminist ethics. Her focus is on moral conflicts and on the claim that "there is no single model [or moral system] for moral choice" and "that cases of practical conflict should not be assimilated to cases of scientific disputes" (97). Part of her conclusion is that "moral conflict lies in the very nature of choice" (97) An answer to that, however, is that not every moral choice involves moral conflict. The choice to keep a promise may be done out of habit, which does not eliminate choice but confirms it. The other part is that moral choice "rarely if ever involves a direct contradiction between the alternatives" (97). Her point seems to be the reasonable and traditional view that moral actions are practical, not theoretical or speculative. Hence contradiction is not even at issue.

Part II, *Counter-Tradition*, opens with David Schweickart's essay, "A Democratic Theory of Economic Exploitation Dialectically Developed." After defining exploitation as, e.g., "X exploits Y if and only if X takes unfair advantage of Y" (102), he claims that a theory of exploitation should do three things. The first is "to clarify the nature of injustice, that is, make clear what normative principles are being violated" (103). The second is to "elucidate the mechanisms and institutions through which exploitation occurs" (103). The third is "to present an alternative vision, that is, a model of a non-exploitative society" (103).

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Schweickart then examines Locke's theory of exploitation along with its "contemporary reincarnation" in Robert Nozick's "entitlement theory." Criticizing it on the grounds of the common good, the Lockean claim of the nearly absolute right of private property (the limitation of "spoilage" being laughable for him because of the unclarity and inoperability of such a limitation), Schweickart dismisses the theory as irrelevant for justice because (1) the current distribution of wealth is derived from the theft of common land, the slave trade, and the extermination of native peoples. Although he seems to be talking about the American economy, he does not say so, leaving himself open to the objection that his criticism of the Lockean-Nozickean theory is a false generalization. He may meet this objection by arguing that (2) it is not immune to monopoly, which negates the economic freedom of almost everyone (105).

Schweickart treats the Smithean/Neo-classical response to monopolistic exploitation through government restriction by law and through greater possibilities of competition as morally irrelevant, since neither capitalist nor landowner (as distinct from entrepreneur and manager) "engage in a productive activity" (108). Nor does he find Marx' labor-value theory of exploitation adequate, since in this theory all labor counts the same without regard to its quality (111). The concept of the "quality" of labor is a significant corrective to the Marxian treatment of labor. Schweickart's account is the wiser and better for it. So too is his criticism of the radical egalitarianism connected to a solely quantitative conception of labor: "not only would such radical egalitarianism require that moral incentives (or coercion) completely replace economic incentives, but it would also require a degree of central planning that cannot be made to function efficiently" (111). At this point he does acknowledge the failure of the Soviet model of central planning.

Continuing in the mode of criticizing radical egalitarianism, Schweickart tackles John Roemer's "Property-Relations Theory of Exploitation," which in its attempt to avoid the egalitarian implications of labor-value theory (that all labor should be rewarded equally) turns out to be more egalitarian. The normative principle here is "the right of any individual or group to a per capita share of the alienable assets of society" (114). This in turn implies that "inequalitites are justified only if *no* subgroups (not merely the least favored) would be better off with an equal distribution." After Schweickart unpacks the jargon, this means that the allocation of goods would make "everyone equally happy" (115). This too egalitarian and too utopian theory leads him to offer his democratic theory as a synthesis of three elements: (1) "workplace democracy"; (2) "a free market for economic goods and services"; (3) "social control of investment" (117). The first means that the workers elect their bosses. (Surprisingly, he does not find this suggestion laughable, either in theory or in practice). The second, a free market, is vitiated by the third, i.e., social control of investment, which will be carried by national, state, and local legislatures playing active roles "in generating the investment fund (via enterprise taxation)" (117). Schweickart takes for granted the economic competence and purity of

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heart of these legislators (and their advisors), in contrast to individual investors (and their advisors): "Economic democracy is a market economy —though not a capitalist economy" (117). Schweickart's central planners, of course, will not be authoritarian and inefficient like their Soviet counterparts. They will have gone to school at Berkeley, Harvard, or even Oxford. Schweickart's reservations about egalitarianism now seem a little clearer.

Iris Marion Young's essay, "Justice and Communicative Democracy," is a proposal to change an interest-based theory of democracy to a communicative theory of democracy mainly derived from Jürgen Habermas' communicative ethics and then from a critical subsumption of Joshua Cohen's "deliberative democracy" as well as John Drysek's "discursive democracy." Interest-based democracy is a process of expressing preferences or demands and then registering them in a vote. The goal is to decide on the rules and policies that will serve the majority's interests. The majority decision will best accomplish the citizens' interests. Interest-based democracy, she complains, is a "privatized understanding of democracy" (126) where individual citizens do not and cannot address their collective interests, in contrast to their individual interests. Deliberative or discursive democracy is "a process of coming together and talking about collective [sic] problems, goals, ideas, and actions" (126). The aim is to reach agreement solely by means of the "force of the argument" (126). Deliberative or discursive democracy, however, may carry oppressive or silencing biases or even a cultural prejudice in favor of rationality (127-129). In the theory of communicative democracy, participants are equal and free of domination. "All [are] equally able to formulate and criticize arguments for alternative proposals" (131). According to Young, what interferes with the theory is majority rule and cultural imperialism, i.e., the cultural imperialism of the usual suspects: white heterosexual males. In practice, Young's theory turns out to privilege such "historically underrepresented groups" as African-Americans and homosexuals. She cites James Bohman and Lani Guinier as among those agents of change who regard majoritarian democracy as unjust. The remedies they propose for the injustice is not only equal opportunity but equal results (135). Group representation and proportionate interest take the place of individual representation and individual interest. Endorsed as well is plural voting, weighted voting, at-large offices tied to specific social groups, and such special considerations for "groups" as television time, radio time, and bus service to the voting booths (as in the 1993 New York City mayoral election). There is nothing like a little sophistry to achieve wisdom or a little injustice to achieve justice.

Milton Fisk's contribution is a critical review of Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Social Strategy* — a post-Marxist and deconstructive challenge to Marxism. Why this essay is found in the counter-tradition part of the book is unclear, unless one reads Fisk as defending the Marxist tradition while criticizing a counter-traditional post-Marxist undermining of that tradition. According to Fisk, Laclau and Mouffe maintain that historical materialism, with its deterministic consequences, is an unsuitable, if not contradictory, basis

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for autonomous political activity. Without the freedom implied by autonomy there can be no politics. The argument is similar to that of moral philosophers who claim that there can be no moral action if agents are not free to choose between alternatives, i.e., no "ought" without "can."

Laclau and Mouffe's attack on Marxist determinism is generalized as an attack on "essentialism," i.e., an attack on a unifying or founding principle. In Aristotelian terms, this means that all properties are accidental. Essences or substances do not exist. Their target is not the economic determinism of Marxism but any deterministic ground or essence, be it matter or history. According to Fisk, they appeal to a Humean concept of cause such that the connection between events called causal is not necessary but solely a matter of temporal succession; i.e., causes and effects are related to each other in time. An event called a cause precedes in time an event called an effect, whereas an event called an effect follows in time an event called a cause. Such a radical contingency is the theoretical support for human agency or autonomy. This indeterminacy, or non-determinacy as Fisk calls it, is related in politics to concepts other than class (such as race, sex, gender), to pluralist democracy, and to the non-literalness of discourse *à la* Derrida. It is, as Richard Rorty calls it, "contingency all the way down."

However, in his defense of Marxism, Fisk claims, without providing any arguments, that historical materialism does not entail an elimination of autonomy. Rather, it depends on the Hegelian notion of a ground which explains the "real" connection, in contrast to mere temporal succession, of cause and effect. Events are connected causally, but the connection does not eliminate the autonomy of human agents. "Class and economic structure are only the structural aspect of a historical method that also searches for stimuli of historical agents" (156). "Systems or structures are not themselves agents but merely conditions of possibility for the interactions of agents" (154). Fisk then applies these philosophical concepts to a particular historical event — the French Revolution. He says that "[b]y 1793 liberty and equality were seen as requiring security, free education, price controls, and the abolition of slavery in the colonies." (156). The concept of liberty and equality Fisk defends is "socialist," whereby the "global economy" is "the context in which race, class, and gender liberation will have to be fought for" (158).

There is no admission of the colossal failure of socialism in the 20th century to bring about economic freedom as the "condition of possibility" for political freedom. For Fisk, "the socialist conception is more relevant than ever, now that liberal capitalism has overcome the barriers to a world system" (158). The defense of an orthodox Marxism, therefore, takes place in the face of a historical denial of monumental proportions. What good is the attempt to trade Marxian hard determinism for a softer kind, which admits a causal connection that conditions but does not eliminate autonomy — an attempt lacking both proof and relevance?

What is peculiar in the next chapter, "Marxism and the Mastery of Nature: An Ecological Critique," by Andrew McLaughlin is the recognition of the

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"problem" of matter as the central philosophical category and materialism as the appropriate philosophical doctrine for the reconciliation of man and nature. McLaughlin wishes to replace the metaphysics of matter with a metaphysics of praxis, believing that he is being more faithful to Marx and Engels who "were simply not much interested in questions of ultimate reality" (167). Furthermore, since "Marxism aligns itself with capitalism in accepting the logic of industrialism" (166) and since "industrialism requires the project of dominating nature" (167), Marxism must be rethought in light of a radical skepticism toward domination and of a "recognition of the embeddedness of humanity within nature" (167). Here lies the peculiarity. In his desire to "save the planet," McLaughlin goes into contortions to salvage the Marxian project by denying its materialism or by changing the meaning of materialism. "The very goal of the mastery of nature is . . . incompatible with a truly dialectical materialism" (176). In order to accomodate ecology: "We need to reject the attempt to master and dominate nature, aspiring instead to integrate it into the biosphere" (179). But in order to do that, McLaughlin need not hold on to a rethought and reworked Marxism. All he needs is praxis, which is its own ground and justification.

Gottlieb's own contribution is entitled "Broken Relations: Some Barriers to the Triumph of Feminine Virtue." For those who have not kept up with developments in feminism and who may still have the innocent view that the issue is equality, the essay may be instructive. For example, Gottlieb speaks of feminine virtues such as "relationality," "empathy" and "cooperation" in contrast to the male vices of "domination," "exploitation" and "violence" — vices that are "endemic to both capitalist and bureaucratic state societies" (183). The point here is merely to illustrate that latter day feminism no longer lays claim to equality but to diversity. The suggestion that "female" virtues might be found in men and male vices in women is almost embarrassing in its banality. It is outdone, however, by Gottlieb's other suggestion that "[a] social order based on the cooperative, nurturing, noncompetitive [sic] style of female interaction would overcome the antagonisms and oppressions of male-dominated society" (183).

But banality is not Gottlieb's intention. He wants to make the case for extending the reach of "feminine virtues" beyond political and social justice toward historical tragedy, existential choice, and natural pain (183). Racial or national conflicts would be examples of historical tragedy. " 'Justice' for the victims of the Holocaust required injustice for the natives of Palestine." [sic] (184). "The embedded historical reality of the 'masculine vices' makes the feminine virtues powerless" (184). The alternative of such *human* virtues as wisdom, courage, moderation, along with justice being up to the task of confronting historical tragedy, does not occur to Gottlieb. But he is right in challenging in this context the proposals of writers such as Carol Gilligan and Sandra Harding, who think that "the removal of male personality structure would end the social basis of oppression, and perhaps violence as well" (186). He criticizes feminine virtues and feminist ethics further for being opaque to the solitariness of making crisis decisions, e.g. whether to become a practicing lesbian or remain a wife

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and mother (188). Existential choice, then, occurs when the entire fabric of traditional or habitual interrelations is doubted and either reaffirmed or rejected. Feminists and others might say in response, however, that there is no incompatibility or conflict between their daily ethical behavior, which always involves choices, albeit habitual, and choices in extraordinary circumstances.

"Some contemporary feminists," says Gottlieb, "write as if virtually all suffering is essentially dependent on social and political causes" (189). They ignore the suffering and death due to forces and threats of nature such as the loss of a child through crib death, the killing of scores of people by tidal waves or volcanic eruptions, and the cutting down of adults in their prime by unexpected heart attacks. He bemoans the feminist viewpoint skewed by the success of modern science and technology — a viewpoint which acknowledges the human threat to nature but not nature's threat to humans (190). But have not feminists had a gnostic posture toward nature — a posture largely marked by dissatisfaction, resentment and even contempt? Have not feminists treated sex and gender not as a matter of nature but of social construction? Have they not created and embraced unisexuality? Have they not embraced technology, especially biotechnology, in their efforts to liberate themselves from nature's oppression to the point where some have said that heterosexual intercourse in marriage is indistinguishable from rape, that men, through the new technology, might bear and nurse offspring, and even more recently, that asexual reproduction would be superior for the human species.[5] Have not marriage and motherhood been viewed as making victims of women such that feminists have campaigned for changing the arrangements of those institutions — institutions which had hitherto been thought of as natural? For feminism to heal "feminism's blindness to natural pain" (191) is at the very least a monumental task. What Gottlieb himself is blind to is that feminism does not admit of tragic pathos. Feminists desire from politics what can be satisfied by no political order whatsoever. By lecturing the feminists on how to direct their ethical concerns, he misses the opportunity for serious criticism and collapses instead into apologetic coaxing.

The concluding part of the anthology and part three carries the redundant title "Politics," redundant, that is, if one takes the editor and authors seriously. In the first of three essays in this part, Frank Cunningham's "Radical Philosophy and the New Social Movements," the expression "radical philosophy" refers to *evaluating* such new social movements as the "women's, peace, municipal, antiracist, gay and lesbian and so on movements" (200). Recognizing the "stuck-record character" of the debates in radical philosophy (202), he suggests as a solution the stuck-record solution "that radical philosophers enter the terrain of actual politics" (203). By this he means not running for public office or governing but critically interrogating social movements (203). This "political activity" makes no sense in the face of a denial of a clear distinction "between

5. See *The New York Times* (May 17, 1994), p. C1.

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philosophical and non-philosophical theoretical labor" (210). Here Cunningham returns to a version of the quaint medieval metaphor of philosophy being the handmaid of theology when he recommends that radical philosophers serve as "adjuncts" to the work of other theorists and those areas "where uniquely philosophical contributions [sic] might be made" (210).

Cunningham suggests in a hortatory manner — the mode and tone of discourse throughout the anthology — that radical philosophers "may wish to defend the view that democracy, somehow regarded, *is* after all the supreme value" but doing so is "extra-political" (217). Rather, the tasks of "the Radical philosopher *qua* radical," he insists, "are to act as an adjunct to anti-oppressive politics," "to employ appropriate philosophical skills to identify systematic oppression, and to help integrate democratic and extra-democratic [sic] values in radical political activity" (217). With philosophy so understood, one wonders whether the owl of Minerva need take wing at all, let alone at dusk.

Spelman's "Slavery and Tragedy" is the most interesting essay in the book because it does have the feel for tragic pathos. It is spoiled, however, by the invidious cant of those who have mastered the language of victimology. It does recognize, however, the haughty neglect of the issue of suffering by Anglo-American analytic philosophy (222-223). But the heart and soul of her essay is her disagreement with Aristotle on "master and slave," the nature of tragedy, and what might be called an Aristotelian interpretation of the American tragedy — white racism expressed in the institution of slavery. While she feigns avoidance of the controversies over the interpretation of Aristotle's concepts of natural mastery and slavery and of his concept of tragedy, her own interpretation of these concepts is necessary for her complaint about "why an Aristotelian slave could not be the subject of an Aristotelian tragedy" (225) and why the suffering of an Aristotelian slave could not be exemplary (227). Furthermore, she seems to move back and forth across the Aristotelian notions of natural slavery and conventional slavery in her discussion about black slavery. The fudging creates confusion both about her grasp of Aristotle and her treatment of so profound a topic. She does not inspire confidence in her reading of Aristotle when she says: "As is clear from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, Aristotle was not in the habit of speaking of humans in general" (227). What then does she make of such sentences as "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit is thought to aim at some good"[6] or "Man is a political animal by nature."[7] Or "all men by nature desire to know."[8] Does she mean that Aristotle is speaking only of white men?

The upshot of Spelman's argument and the motive for her discussing the Aristotelian concepts of tragedy and slavery are to demonstrate that thinking

6. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1, 1. See Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 935.
7. *Politics 1*, 2; in McKeon, *op. cit.*, p. 1129.
8. *Metaphysics 1*, 1; in McKeon, *op. cit.*, p. 689.

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of slavery as the American tragedy is to put "a good face on an ugly fact" (237). "If slavery is the American tragedy, then even though attention is thereby directed to the suffering of slaves, the real subjects of slavery are some white Americans, good and grand enough of heart and mind to envision an egalitarian society, but also and necessarily good and grand enough ultimately to recognize and be pained by their own flaws and the wretched effect of them on black Americans" (236). She evaluates Peter Parish's judgment in *Slavery: History and Historians* (1989), where he calls the existence of slavery in the American republic a "malignant tumor," an "irony," and a "paradox," but she finds his judgment only a small improvement. For [w]hile neither "irony" nor "paradox" point us in the direction of those who suffered under slavery, they nonetheless do less to glorify the failures of a white supremacist America than does "tragedy" (237).

Since the concept of tragedy glorifies and excuses whites, on the one hand, and does not account adequately for the suffering of blacks, on the other, Spelman wishes to put aside the notion of tragedy and proposes for the thoughtful reader a redemptive vision constructed by blacks themselves — a vision which excludes whites altogether. It is the world of spirituals, where "the farthest thing from the minds and hearts of many slaves in terms of a redemptive vision was the image of tragically flawed whites owning up to their faults" (239). The world of spirituals, says Spelman, quoting Lawrence Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (1977), is one where white masters and mistresses did not establish the precedents and define the values or set the standards. Rather God, Jesus, and the Old Testament figures did. They were the "significant others." The world of spirituals was "a black world in which no reference was ever made to any white contemporaries" (239). Tragedy, in other words, "preempts" the most profound criticism of whites by blacks and ignores the resources of blacks for understanding and treating their suffering independently of their association with whites (240). From whom, however, the slaves learned about God, Jesus, and the Old Testament figures appears to be an issue of no importance to Spelman.[9]

The final essay of the anthology is almost the perfect ending — a commentary on a fiction, "A Fairy Tale with a Difference? Class and Gender in *Pretty Woman*," by Thomas Wartenberg. It opens with some informative distinctions between mass culture, popular culture, and high culture — the last called into question for arbitrarily being regarded as high and the first defended against

9. If the US and its Constitution collapse, as they nearly did during the Civil War, then that would be (it seems) the makings of an Aristotelian tragedy which would encompass the suffering of blacks, whites, and the races that also escaped Spelman's concerns. The tragic flaw of the Founding Fathers was a failure of understanding in their continuing to permit an institution they had already recognized to be "peculiar." That prospect of collapse lingers in the consequences of slavery and in the equally flawed efforts to address those consequences — thus the *mise en scène* of an American tragedy in which the protagonists are black as well as white.

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being regarded as unworthy of critical treatment. Wartenberg takes the motion picture *Pretty Woman* as a worthy example of mass culture, pointing to the significance of difference. The main characters are Edward Lewis and Vivian Ward. He is a successful corporate takeover specialist and she a street prostitute. By evoking the theme of the Cinderella fairy tale and departing from it, says Wartenberg, the movie tries to make several interrelated points. One is that princes need to be saved in order for them to save the princesses. Edward is seen through feminist lenses in that the contempt for others which makes him a successful businessman at the same time prevents him from having intimacy and friendship (248). His transformation is accomplished by a reversal from the first posture to the second. This transformation or salvation is accomplished by Vivian through her love affair with him. He achieves intimacy with her and adopts "a new non-competitive way [sic] of doing business" (257). Her transformation consists in her having greater respect for herself through his treatment of her, "emerging less of a victim" and seeking "to take control of her life by rejecting her career as a prostitute" (259). In the climax, Edward fulfills Vivian's dream by riding to her in a contemporary version of the knight (or prince) on horseback, climbing the "tower" (although afraid of heights), and rescuing her as she rescues him (to satisfy its feminist theme).

The movie, says Wartenberg, recycles the fairy tale but departs from it for contemporary fashions. It uses the fairy tale not only to teach a feminist revision of the relation between a man and a woman but to say that the film itself is a fairy tale as are Hollywood films in general (257). The last is a profound insight only for those few academics who thought otherwise, taking their cues from the fictions of movies and television. Thus it is no accident that *Pretty Woman* is a fairy tale through which feminists see relations between men and woman. For Wartenberg, "although *Pretty Woman* acknowledges the need to rewrite fairy tales in order to remove their sexism, it fails to do the same in regard to class" (260). What is more, "[b]y treating Vivian's class identity as requiring erasure, the film backs off from its earlier assertion that her class identity allowed her to relate to Edward differently than [sic] women in his class. In so doing, the film undercuts its depiction of social differences as enabling Edward and Vivian to achieve intimacy with each other" (261).

Wartenberg finds contradictory, objectionable and insidious "the idea that one's actual social class conceals a more authentic class identity" (263). Positively odious is the suggestion that "one is born with an inherited ethical class identity that is not changed by one's social circumstances." The movie spoils itself, he argues, through such a suggestion that socially significant differences are not ultimately real or "essential to the vitality of people's lives" (264). Wartenberg ignores or denies that there are two other levels of difference that are more significant to the relation of Edward and Vivian. One is biological, and although inherited, is not of pure necessity. The chromosome arrangements occur contingently. They are male and female, or better, man and woman. The difference between them is not obliterated but emphasized by

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sex and love. It is the difference that someone has said is the first thing we notice and the last we forget. The other is ethical and is not inherited but achieved through deliberation, effort and the choice of what is good. Moral character is deeper than social class. It is a significant difference and it is deeper in that it makes possible a transition from one social class to another. To make or lose money, as a financier does, at least requires the presence or absence of intelligence and courage (taking risks). These levels of difference may not be stressed in either the movie or in Wartenberg's consciousness but they are the emphases at the interstices of reality.

Most of the authors of this anthology claim not to know the difference between philosophy and politics. They deny the possibility of objective knowledge, but pronounce with certitude that patriarchy and capitalism are the sources of all human problems. They speak of social injustice, but do not admit to possible acts of injustice committed in their own "good" causes. And they do this from positions of power and privilege, while feigning to be victims or speakers for victims. A mere glance at where many of them teach is instructive. Beguiled by their sense of cosmic moral superiority, they have left a path of destruction through traditions and social institutions — family, church, and school. While they bleat their postmodern criticisms of the Enlightenment, theirs is a vulgar and untimely Enlightenment faith in a future unfettered by nature or the past. Wedded to an abstract notion of equality, they are at war with the fact of merit. Their own claim to privilege is solely their speeches against the injustices of privilege. This rhetoric naturally transmutes them from critics of society to omnicompetent legislators, executives and judges. As A. J. Bacevich has observed, radicals of this sort have become entrenched "in the academy, the mass media, the courts, and the legislatures. . . . They have also sown confusion about moral values, contributed to the disintegration of the social order, promoted self-indulgence and the cult of victimization, and encouraged balkanization of American society. They have empowered new elites who no longer bother to conceal their contempt for the antiquarian and philistine values of middle America."[10]

Nino Langiulli

10. "The Illusions of Military Power", *First Things*, No. 44, p. 30 (June/July, 1994).

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Identity Crisis

Martin J. Matustik, *Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993), XXII + 329 pp.

In *Postnational Identity*, Martin Matustik pursues three main objectives. First, he attempts to create a synthesis between Critical Theory and existential philosophy. Second, he attempts to build a philosophical model of post-traditional and post-national identity on the basis of this synthesis. Third, this post-traditional and post-national identity should fit Matustik's various and at times inconsistent political engagements. He constructs his post-national identity through a synthesis of Habermas and Kierkegaard. Vaclav Havel is supposed to personify this synthesis. A creative dialogue between Critical Theory and existentialism, as well as the construction of a post-national identity are both important and timely projects. But a synthesis of Habermas and Kierkegaard does not seem to lead to the desired post-national and post-traditional identity. Matustik develops a good critique of Habermas. Yet, while Kierkegaard may correct some of Habermas' mistakes, Kierkegaard's account is also problematic, in view of constructing a post-traditional and post-national identity. It is also a mistake to interpret Havel as fitting Matustik's Habermasian-Kierkegaardian post-national identity. Finally, Matustik's own political engagements do not seem to resemble either Habermas/Kierkegaard or his post-national identity. Matustik dislikes communitarianism, nationalism, fundamentalism, the Gulf War, and the "New World Order." He likes Charter 77, Vaclav Havel, democratic socialism, multiculturalism, and "political correctness" in the academy.

Matustik departs from Habermas' Copenhagen lecture where he tried to interpret Kierkegaard according to his communicative turn. Habermas accepted Kierkegaard's radically honest individual in a state of identity crisis as fitting modern society. Yet Habermas assumed that group identity is a necessary condition for personal identity. In conjunction with Wittgenstein's linguistic downturn and fall, the private language argument, Habermas shifts the center of identity formation from Kierkegaard's individual to the communication community, from the subject to the inter-subjective level. According to Habermas, there are no unsocialized meanings and norms. Every rational (identity) choice must be communicative. Finally, Habermas attacked Kierkegaard's transcendental discourse as either untranslatable to the non-religious languages of modernity; or, if it is translatable, the distinction between theology and expert discourse disappears. Thus Habermas proposed to replace Kierkegaard's

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"vertical" transcendentality with an "horizontal" communicative model.

Though Matustik develops his ideas within the framework of Habermasian discourse, he is far less Habermasian than may appear at first sight. Though he uses far too much Habermasian jargon and his sentences are unnecessarily complex (though the separation of chapters to shorter sections eases reading considerably), Matustik criticizes correctly Habermas' panacea against communitarianism, nationalism, fundamentalism, and the encroachment of the state, permanent democratic revolution based on constitutional patriotism and an ideal communicating community. Habermas' deliberative democracy is insufficient for an effective, non-procedural critique of nationalism. Habermas' over-emphasis on the creation of consensus disregards the possibility of the emergence *of a sincere nationalist collectivist* consensus. Behind this neglect of existential individualism lies a metaphysical assumption of the linguistic downturn and fall of 20th century philosophy.[1] Matustik defends Kierkegaard against Habermas' Wittgensteinian accusations of reliance on a private language and, wisely, turns away from the linguistic turn. One cannot account for communication when one reduces the individual to the objective structures of linguistic interaction. Thus it is necessary to distinguish a subjective mode of acceptance from validity claims that can be objectively accepted or rejected (129).

Vertical inwardness may be interpreted as neither self-reflective nor necessarily traditional or religious, but as a Socratic distancing from tradition. Vertical inwardness is not problematic and does not require Habermas' translation to horizontal communitarism. Matustik answers Habermas: "But the yes-no position towards the how of one's temporal existing does not have to do with the choice of values. To worry about a decisionism or monologism of radical self-choice is, then, a category mistake" (122). Habermas' communal consensus cannot guarantee earnest communication and the prevention of totalitarianism. Habermas does not account for how self-choice and communication may be achieved. This necessitates Kierkegaardian "vertical" inwardness: "Habermas does not inquire how the exister, in principle, can sustain an opposition to system and transcend the *status quo*, or how an earnest attitude can be concrete without a drivenness to heroic culture. He neglects the critical function of an existential questioning and fails to detect the sacralization of validity domains. Without the how of identity, communication, and the ideal, consensual procedures are too anonymous to protect projected possibilities against totalitarian results" (125). This Kierkegaardian critique of Habermas is probably Matustik's greatest achievement in this book. What follows is an interesting, though at times peculiar, reading of Kierkegaard's honest and radical self-choice of identity in crisis. Matustik interprets Kierkegaard as analyzing the

1. As Van Fraassen puts it: "The main lesson of twentieth century philosophy of science may be this: no concept which is essentially language dependent has any philosophical importance at all." Bass Van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 56.

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crisis of modernity as the demise of receptive identity. The solution is not the death of the author and the end of history, but self-authoring characters, self-readers reinventing themselves. Matustik's interpretation of Kierkegaard as a dramatist in chapter IX is exceptionally lucid. A Socratic primitivity and second naiveté should lead through passion and action, inwardness and verticality, to the promised post-national and post-traditional mode of living, a self-transformative requirement of communication.

Matustik demonstrates the superiority of Kierkegaardian to Habermasian identity formation. He contrasts continuously Kierkegaard's post-national identity with traditionalism, communitarianism, nationalism, and fundamentalism. But, Kierkegaardian radical self-choice cannot exclude non-traditional and non-communitarian fundamentalism, based on radical self-choice and self-authoring (religious fundamentalist rebirth). This is more than a problem of stipulating another criterion of post-traditional identity. Kierkegaard's own characterization of self-choice fits perfectly modern fundamentalism.

Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in *Fear and Trembling* resembles more 20th century fundamentalism than traditional Judaism or Christianity. In contrast with the purpose of the Biblical story of Isaac's sacrifice, Kierkegaard separates the ethical from the divine: ". . . Either the individual as the particular can stand in an absolute relation to the absolute, and then the ethical is not the highest, or Abraham is done for. . . ."[2] In the Bible, there are no individuals as particulars. Abraham is a symbol of the Jewish collective. In contrast with Hegelian reduction of faith to ethics and reason, Kierkegaard held that the only possible legitimation for Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is from faith, and faith is a monstrous paradox: ". . . faith is a paradox capable of making a murder into a holy act well pleasing to God, a paradox which gives Isaac back to Abraham, which no thought can grasp because faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off."[3] Faith, "a paradox capable of making a murder into a holy act well pleasing to God," is individual. Other people like Sarah, Isaac, or Kierkegaard himself cannot possibly comprehend Abraham because understanding assumes the rational ethical universal, rather than the transcendental domain of faith that requires an *individual* leap of faith to achieve.[4] In effect, Kierkegaard legitimates fundamentalist individual *teleological suspension of the ethical*. Kierkegaard contrasts Abraham's post-traditional and post-national sacrifice of Isaac with communitarian and nationalist sacrifices: Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia, Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter, and Junius Brutus' execution of his two sons for attempting to restore the last king of Rome, Tarquinius, to power.

Matustik does not take into account the individualist, self-choosing, nature of

2. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Tr. Alastair Hannay, (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 137.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-144.

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modern fundamentalism and groups it incorrectly with nationalism. Modern fundamentalism is so dangerous exactly because it is not communitarian like traditional religion. Since every reborn fundamentalist thinks he has a direct phone line to the Almighty that legitimates every atrocity he commits, there are no community or community representatives to negotiate with. Modern fundamentalism is not traditionalist and is not necessarily nationalist. Matustik's understanding of fundamentalism is simplistic and confused with nationalism. He may have had one Pilsner too many when he wrote: "But *de silentio*'s Abraham is nowhere to be heard in Jerusalem's bloodshed or in Middle East wars for macho identities, oil and orthodoxies. . . . to be a good Jew or Czech or American I cannot keep getting high on flag-waving and land conquest. To cure my patriotic addiction to the worship of family, flag, market and culture, this Abraham prompts me to become post-national. The self-reader of Abraham is, thus, weaned from songs like 'my land, the beautiful,' from longing *for patriotic and communitarian breasts, from the narcissistic food of national* seaman, and from marches and hymns of mother-and fatherland. . . ." (160). When nationalist communities and their leaders get tired of mutual destruction, even if it takes an odd hundred years, they can negotiate and reach some compromise. Post-traditional fundamentalists with a divine license to kill do not have stable communities that can reach such compromises. The Middle East conflict was sustained (for far more complicated reasons than Matustik allows) by nationalist communities. Now, the nationalist leaders attempt to reach a peace of the exhausted. The danger comes now from Kierkegaardian Abrahams who believe they have a divine right to sacrifice whomever to their gods.[5]

Matustik interprets Havel's existential revolution as a political manifestation of post-national and post-traditional identity. "Why would Havel call November 1989 in Czechoslovakia not only the 'Velvet Revolution' but also existential revolution?" (187). Well, the late Rita Klimova invented the term "the Velvet Revolution," probably following the slogan of some Austrian pantyhose company. . . . As for the existential revolution, Havel has been preparing expectations for it for at least ten years before the Velvet Revolution, hoping a revolution on the existential level would lead to a separate though connected political revolution. In *The Power of the Powerless* the existential revolution is strictly a Heideggerian new stage in the history of being, a post-technological age for which we can only prepare expectations, i.e. *social and political activity is useless for bringing it about*.[6] In letter 143 to Olga, Havel describes "the existential revolution" in three ways. First, it is a return to Jan Patocka's authentic first

5. Accordingly, Matustik's criticism of Wolin's connecting Kierkegaard with Carl Schmitt (p. 254) is off the mark. Wolin points correctly to the similarity between Schmitt's state and Kierkegaard's individual: Richard Wolin, "Carl Schmitt, Political Existentialism, and the Total State," in *Theory and Society* 19 (1990), pp. 389-416.

6. Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965-1990*, Tr. Paul Wilson, (New York: Vintage Press, 1992), pp. 206-207. See also Aviezer Tucker, "Vaclav Havel's Heideggerianism," in *Telos* 85 (Fall 1990), pp. 63-78.

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movement of acceptance, according to Patocka's concept of human existence as a movement divided into three sub-movements of acceptance, defense, and truth, inspired by a combination of Aristotle and Heidegger.[7] Second, it is responsibility for Being, closely akin to Heidegger's care as the Being of *Dasein*. Thirdly, it is communal and political authenticity, associated by Havel with what was perceived by Czechoslovak dissidents as anti-establishment movements: youth revolt, peace movements, human rights movements, liberation movements, religious and ecumenical revivals, and ecological initiatives.[8] Following the Velvet Revolution, after calling for a Heideggerian existential revolution in a speech to the joint session of the US Congress,[9] Havel emptied it of content in his Summer Meditations, where it became merely environmental-ecologic responsibility.[10]

In its non-vacuous sense, the existential revolution never happened. The Velvet Revolution was a political revolution, occasioned by the dissolution of the Soviet Empire. The dissidents were initially the only organized alternative to the communist party that could fill the power vacuum. All this had nothing to do with any existential revolution, as dissident Havel had envisioned it. The latter (and the Velvet Revolution) cannot be interpreted in Habermasian-Kierkegaardian terms. The existential revolution was mostly Heideggerian, and the Velvet Revolution is more of a consumer than an existential revolution.

Matustik does offer an interesting and at times insightful analysis of some of Havel's philosophical letters to Olga; Havel's interpretation of Levinas (Havel's younger brother, Ivan, sent him long quotations in his letters); and his cultural self-irony, activism and pathos, characteristics that ought to be remembered when someone (like me) criticizes Havel's Heideggerian pathos. Still, Matustik celebrates Havel's non-political politics as coterminous with the existential revolution, protecting the life-world from the markets and professional irresponsible politics.

Havel sees all political parties as necessarily resembling the communist party: technological, bureaucratic, corrupt and irresponsible. Havel's remedy was politics based on individuals, elected on the grounds of their personal integrity

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7. On Patocka's three movements see: Ivan Chvatik and Pavel Kouba, eds., Jan Patocka, *Kacirske Eseje O Filosofii Dejin* (Prague: Academia, 1990), pp. 43-64; Jan Patocka, "The Natural World and Phenomenology and The Movement of Human Existence: A Selection from Body, Community, Language, World," in Erazim Kohak, *Jan Patocka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), pp. 239-273 & 274-284.

8. Vaclav Havel, *Letters to Olga*, ed. Jan Lopatka, tr. by Paul Wilson (London: Faber & Faber, 1990), pp. 369-372.

9. Vaclav Havel, "Address to a Joint Session of the United States Congress," in Tim D. Whipple, ed., *After the Velvet Revolution: Vaclav Havel and the New Leaders of Czechoslovakia Speak Out* (New York: Freedom House, 1991), pp. 69-80. Cf. my review in *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-1993), pp. 167-182.

10. Vaclav Havel, *Summer Meditations*, tr. by Paul Wilson, (New York: Knopf, 1992), pp. 115-116. Cf. my review in *Telos* 91 (Spring 1992), pp. 179-184.

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and responsibility. Havel did not consider that political parties may not be necessarily as corrupt as the Communist Party, or that parties facilitate the creation of coalitions and the implementation of resolute reformist government policy, against the tendency of individual representatives to push constantly in different directions at the same time. Havel did not consider that candidates who do not have fame and fortune may require the help of a party apparatus to be elected. In this respect, political parties help to prevent an elitist government representing the interests of the rich and famous. Matustik recognizes some of the faults of Havel's non-political politics (225-227), but he does not recognize that Havel's personal refusal to join a political party led eventually to his ouster from all actual political power. Without a party as a parliamentary power-base, Vaclav Klaus, who has such a base, stipulated in the new Czech constitution a symbolic presidency. There is nothing to celebrate in Havel's non-political politics. It has many faults, and eventually it is self-destructive.

Matustik identifies Havel's adoption of Patocka's solidarity of the shaken and sacrificed with an earnest democratic community and non-political politics. The inspiration for Patocka's solidarity of the shaken and Havel's non-political politics (and Vaclav Benda's *Parallel Polis*) comes from their experience of dissident communities. Yet the philosophical origins of the solidarity of the shaken, in Ernst Jünger and Teilhard de Chardin, and the insufficient criteria stipulated for justified sacrifice, make the philosophical characterization incompatible with post-national identity, irrespective of what Patocka and Havel *meant* to convey.[11]

Matustik attempts to interpret the Velvet Revolution and the transformation of Eastern Europe as an existential revolution of shaken communities, leading to non-political politics and post-national identities. Then he attempts to equate it with Habermasian radical democracy, thus saving a vision of the "Left" for the 1990s. Still, Havel himself retreated from his earlier interpretation. Most of the demonstrating students and dissidents who started the Velvet Revolution on November 17, 1989 cannot be considered leftist, no matter how broadly "leftism" may be defined. The Czechs preferred Friedrich Hayek and Vaclav Klaus to Habermas and Zeman, and the Slovaks chose Meciar (and some even Tiso) over Dubcek. There does not seem to be a viable, credible, and realistic leftist-Habermasian intellectual alternative in the former Soviet Empire.

For Matustik, Havel is the new post-national, post-traditional man. Havel, has been opposing nationalism (e.g., the Serbs in former Yugoslavia), racism (e.g., discrimination against Romanies and anti-Semitism), totalitarianism, and fundamentalism (e.g., he invited Salman Rushdie to meet him, while Prime Minister Klaus refused). However, like most ex-dissidents, Havel is a traditionalist. Against the ideology of communist *pokrok* (progress), the dissidents posed an ideal past, and longed for a return to at times ideal, at times real, traditions. Following

11. Ivan Chvatik, "Solidarity of the Shaken," in *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-1993), pp. 163-6. See also Aviezer Tucker, "Sacrifice: From Isaac to Patocka," in *Telos* 91 (Spring 1992), pp. 117-124.

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Patocka and Heidegger, Havel regarded the pre-modern age as the golden age of authentic humanity.

More strange than mistaken is Matustik's association of Havel and post-national and post-traditional identity with American academic *political correctness*. The intolerance and disregard of freedom of speech associated with political correctness, the lack of understanding and use of humor, sarcasm, and irony are foreign to central European culture. As Matustik must remember, Charter 77 reacted first against the imposition of communist political correctness against the offensive lyrics of the rock group "Plastic People of the Universe." Matustik puts so nicely the philosophical case against political correctness: "In Climacus' experimental prose, open communication functions somewhat as a concretely operative ideal requirement: student and teacher or author and reader are viewed as equals. The communicator cannot give birth to the student; she can emancipate him by providing an occasion for self-appropriation. A true teacher or author cannot make herself into more than a temporal exister. She must have both the courage and humility to maintain dialogic reciprocity. . . . This equality has to be sustained by all parties involved. For each it is an uphill climb to confront one's tendency to elitism. One learns to view the alter and oneself with equal humility and with equal pride. . . . This Socratic-Kierkegaardian education and reading experience occasions a silent revolution in the academia and media, which are shot through with everything from patriarchal and monocultural hierarchies, to authoritative obstacles in learning, to the rote method of instruction, to disinterest in the recipient's passion, to spiritless educators and authors. The administrator who thinks of his role as the key to educational or publication enterprise might find Climacus' experiment a slap in the face: no human being has ever truly been an authority or has benefited anyone else by being that or has ever really managed successfully to carry his dependent along. . ."(136-137). Matustik's cultural and intellectual origins are not those of the politically correct, intellectually masturbating, socially isolated, American academic terrorist orthodoxy. He was born in Slovakia to a Jewish mother and a Slovak father. While a student at Prague's Charles University, at age 19, he signed Charter 77. Consequently, he had to make a leap of faith across the Czechoslovak-Austrian frontier. He spent months as a refugee, before emigrating to the US. After spending half of his life in the US, it seems that the powers of cultural leveling did their work on Matustik to the point of giving him a politically correct image of himself. While discussing Kierkegaard's radical self-choice and self-authoring, Matustik raises the possibility of re-appropriating traditions. Matustik! Is it not time to make another leap of faith, back to authentic identity, back to where you came from: Patocka's Charter 77?

Aviezer Tucker

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Judaism and Modernity

Gillian Rose, *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1993). xii + 279pp.

Ironically, the authoritative call of Adorno and others to recognize Auschwitz as a point of reference for modernity has become a pretext for avoiding any further examination of this question. This is also true with respect to any consideration of the role of Judaism after Auschwitz. Only now, when the necessary and painful consideration of the "holocaust" has seemingly reached a point of intellectual saturation, is it possible to extend the view of Judaism beyond the fatality of history in order to gain a fuller understanding of identity in the modern age. What has been needed all along, namely to revisit, rethink and rewrite Jewish history from an unreservedly critical standpoint, now appears possible because it is becoming increasingly clear that the "holocaust" is incapable of providing the basis for the self-understanding of its victims.

Since the 1950s, Hermann Levin Goldschmidt has been arguing for the need to rediscover and recover what he calls the legacy of German Jewish culture.[1] Alain Finkielkraut has warned of "the imaginary Jew."[2] Goldschmidt has spoken similarly of "Jews without Judaism." One way of responding to this predicament is the neo-fundamentalist "return" to a world of tradition, belief, and comfort that in fact never really existed. But such a futile exercise may not prove sufficient for everyone. At any rate, a critique of contemporary philosophical interpretations of Judaism is long overdue, and this is precisely what Gillian Rose's collection of essays provides.

Taken together, Rose's essays constitute a systematic and critical review of the philosophical constructions of Judaism in the 20th century. Attempts to understand Judaism's place in the West often have been couched in an Oriental framework, namely the juxtaposition of Athens vs. Jerusalem, Greek and Hebrew thinking (by both Jews and non-Jews). Rose subjects such approaches to a rigorous critique. Rightly suspicious of "the violence infecting these philosophical purifications which ignore their own preconditions and outcomes" (x), she points out the costs of such approaches in each case. Like any other construction, Judaism is predicated on excluding those elements which do not fit

1. See Hermann Levin Goldschmidt, *Das Vermächtnis des deutschen Judentums*, newly republished as Vol. 2 of his *Collected Works*, ed. by Willi Goetschel (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 1994).

2. See Alain Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, tr. by Kevin O'Neill and David Suchoff (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). See also Suchoff's instructive introduction to this edition.

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the idea of what it is supposed to look like in a particular case.

Rather than imagining an ideal concept of Judaism, what is needed now is the recognition that all such efforts are necessarily spurious. The problem of Judaism and modernity poses an altogether new type of challenge. No longer is Judaism the search for a deontological, normative response to the question of Jewish identity, whatever that may be. The understanding of Judaism is now inseparable from the understanding of modernity. To abstract and isolate Judaism from modernity would be tantamount to reconditioning and reinventing it arbitrarily. To strip Judaism of its contingent and historical framework would result in an interpretive intervention with unwarranted normative consequences. In her discussion of Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas, Rose demonstrates the ideological grounds of any contraposition of Judaism and modernity. Philosophers like Strauss and Levinas may actually reconfirm, though involuntarily, the very views they set out to challenge. Precisely because their theories are apologetic, they are susceptible to reinforcing the ideological presuppositions they criticize. The reason for this is that a radical critique is bound to play by the rules of a given framework. Such a framework can be challenged effectively only on its own terms. The complicity of radicalism leads to that violence which Rose exposes as the repressive aspect of the Athens-Jerusalem model, which anthropologizes cultural difference in order to domesticate it. Coming to grips with the arguments not only of such philosophers as Strauss and Levinas, but also with those of Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber (and their followers) Rose is able to expose the problematic nature of their metaphysical assumptions. Not surprisingly, such projects are not specifically Jewish; rather they resemble those of their radical non-Jewish colleagues whose metaphysical assumptions they share.

For many Jewish philosophers, it was only logical that the question of Jewish identity turned into the question of whether there is a Jewish philosophy. As Rose indicates, the problem is less the answer but why the question arose at all. "Reflection on the question of whether there is a Jewish philosophy leads either to post-modern skepticism completed by a fantasized Judaism, or to those earnest prophets completed by an imperative Judaism" (23). The "prophets" — not only Emil Fackenheim and Zygmunt Bauman but also Rosenzweig, Strauss and Levinas — are problematic because they rule out the possibility of a critical reflection concerning their values. Moreover, they do so in the name of an authenticity which could not withstand the confrontation with modernity. The appeal to norms, ideals and values, whatever their moral superiority might be, is no longer able to establish the grounds of legitimacy. Simply stated, once tradition is recognized as the by-product of modernity, it is no longer able to legitimate itself. There are no special ontological pockets left untouched by the process of modernization.

To consider "Jewish philosophy" a separate category would be tantamount to assuming that just such an ontological pocket still exists and thereby creates a special status. Moreover, such a special status would allow the possibility of

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obviating the necessity of a critical approach to modernity. But since no such special status exists, what is needed is a careful examination of conceptions of "Jewish philosophy," which would explain the disputatious quagmire in which one is caught the moment one enters into normative debates.

Instead of adding a new sweeping interpretation of Judaism or recycling an old one, Rose pursues a painstaking critique of the positions advanced by philosophical interpretations of Judaism. As she sorts out the normative baggage, her analysis documents the virulence with which Judaism defies being used instrumentally in some philosophical agendas. She provides neither answers nor solutions, but rather chooses to focus on those urgent questions which, as long as they remain unaddressed, render any critical approach impossible. The main contribution of her book consists in exposing the philosophical underpinnings of claims which, presented as timeless discoveries of original determinations, turn out to be the products of the modernity they claim to transcend. Any reader who finds this strategy unsatisfactory must also refuse to recognize the critical imperative which gives this book its momentum. To insist that Judaism can be turned into a philosophical concept without losing its identity is to ignore the fundamental role modernity has come to play in any determination of identity.

Concerning this last, we are confronted with that aporia of the irreconcilable rupture or "diremption" of the broken middle Rose discussed in an earlier book.[3] In modernity there is no point of origin or center of reference to ground the conflicting spheres of consciousness. In this respect, Judaism provides an exemplary case of the impossibility of imagining identity apart from the everchanging parameters of modernity. Of course, at times the essence of Judaism has been located precisely in this everchanging quality. But this is just another misconception. The search for identity itself betrays the crisis of modern consciousness. Rose suggests that we understand Judaism not as a way out of that crisis but as a way of working through it.

Willi Goetschel

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3. See Gillian Rose, *The Broken Middle* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA; Basil Blackwell, 1992).

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Overcoming Alienation: A Conservative Alternative

Rocco Buttiglione, *Augusto Del Noce: Biografia di un Pensiero* (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1991), 241pp.

For years Left cultural hegemony in Italy managed to marginalize "politically incorrect" positions. Thus major thinkers suspected of conservative sympathies were not taken very seriously in a public sphere dominated by a leftist culture industry, even though they occasionally provided critiques of modern society as penetrating as those on the Left (and sometimes surprisingly similar). Only after 1989, with the collapse of communism, has the situation begun to change, paving the way for a new interest in those previously excluded authors. Such has been the case with Augusto Del Noce (1910-1989), whose biography, by Rocco Buttiglione, reconstructs not only what appears as a very unusual theoretical perspective (because of its absence from "officially recognized" theoretical debates) but also the troubled journey of Italian thought from the fascist period to the present. Buttiglione is one of Italy's leading Catholic philosophers currently active in the *Partito Popolare* (the reformed Christian Democratic Party). More importantly, for years he has been one of the leaders of *Comunione e Liberazione* — an influential populist Catholic movement combining "economic radicalism and cultural conservatism."[1] Del Noce has been and remains the main inspiration for *Comunione e Liberazione*.[2]

1. This movement follows Pope John Paul II, whose conservative moral values are counterbalanced by a social vision predicated on brotherhood and solidarity. It differs from leftist Catholic groups, which rely exclusively on the welfare state to manage socio-economic matters, and is hostile to any kind of "historical compromise" between the former Communist and Christian Democratic Parties. It is also opposed to any version of Thatcherism or Reaganism because it claims that economic individualism destroys the values it claims to uphold and erodes traditional social bonds of family and community. Similarly, it holds economic liberalism responsible for the spread of a mass culture predicated on narcissism, cynicism, consumerism and hedonism. Thus Roberto Formigoni, a *Comunione e Liberazione* leader, has criticized "Catholic communism" in an interview with Francesco Verderami. See "Formigoni: Dobbiamo Virare a Destra," in *Corriere della Sera* (April 5, 1994). *Comunione e Liberazione* is very similar to those political movements Christopher Lasch includes under the umbrella of populism in his reexamination of the American anti-liberal tradition. See his *The True and Only Heaven* (New York: Norton, 1991). For Lasch, populism cannot be understood exclusively either as a Left "progressive" or a Right "conservative" phenomenon.

2. Born in Pistoia in 1910, Del Noce lived most of his life in Turin where he attended the Liceo Massimo D'Azeglio, a school which has produced some of the most important anti-fascist intellectuals, such as Norberto Bobbio, Cesare Pavese and Giulio Einaudi. Del Noce's first intellectual influences were Thomism, Jacques

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Del Noce was first and foremost a Catholic philosopher, which helps explain why Bobbio called him "the Italian Maistre" — a characterization Del Noce did not resent since he regarded himself as the last representative of the Savoiard philosophical tradition (229). As Buttiglione points out, however, this tradition was neither static nor anti-modern and, in the final analysis, Del Noce did not really uncritically accept all of Maistre's ideas: "There is a restoration of values and a restoration of social relations; the two may be disconnected and may take place separately or even in opposition to each other. Del Noce was particularly interested in the restoration of values" (230). The latter was attempted by Antonio Rosmini, who argued that the rebirth of national consciousness in the 19th century could only succeed as a "restorative revolution" breaking sharply with the past by eliminating the old ruling class, but simultaneously restoring traditional values such as Catholicism, the oral tradition of rural society, and the federalist structure of the Comuni.[3] Rosmini rejected the rationalist concept that knowledge can be attained only by scientific methods. He believed that human actions are always the result of intentions guided by divine inspiration.[4]

Del Noce's main objective was to develop a *modern* Christian alternative to both Marxism and idealism. Later in life he argued for the restoration of Catholic values to oppose pathologies of modernity such as consumerism and materialism. In this sense, Del Noce's ideas as well as his solutions fit well with Catholic integralism, which is precisely the target of the liberal critics. He was accused of opposing the "market economy and the capitalist-bourgeois world he held responsible for many of today's problems." Above all, he opposed secularization — "the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, which had marginalized the Catholic Church. On the basis of this premise, he condemned society and the masses no longer able to heed the sacred and the transcendental."[5] Liberal-democrats also warn that if Del Noce's ideas were accepted they would lead inevitably to the imposition of Catholic values on non-believers.

Maritain, and Left Catholicism. Later in life he began to study the French counter-revolution, especially Joseph de Maistre. As an anti-fascist during the 1930s, Del Noce taught philosophy in several high schools. Thereafter, he taught philosophy at the Universities of Trieste and Rome. After WWII, he remained marginalized as much as he had been during the years of the fascist dictatorship. Most of his works were published by a small house, Rusconi, and most of his articles appeared in conservative newspapers such as *Il Tempo*. After a brief stint as a Christian Democratic senator, Del Noce became disenchanted with the Party and wrote that "Christian democracy, among other things, is characterized by a total insensibility to political culture and custom." See Augusto Del Noce, "Perche' Questa Italia non ci Piace," in *Quale Democrazia puo' Risolvere la Crisi delle Istituzioni Italiane* (Rome: Atti della Fondazione Gioacchino Volpe, 1984), p. 24.

3. On Rosmini and Catholic federalism, see Michele Nicoletti, *Stato Unitario e Federalismo nel Pensiero Cattolico dell'Ottocento* (Brescia: Stresa, 1994).

4. Rocco Buttiglione, "Fede d'Assalto," in Panorama (May 21, 1994), p. 137.

5. Lucio Colletti, "Ma non Canonizzatelo," in *Panorama* (May 21, 1994), p. 137.

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His primary focus was the Italian philosophical tradition. While he acknowledged Marxism as a powerful secular religion able to challenge the Catholic Church's moral authority, he focused on Giovanni Gentile's philosophy, with an eye on the Marxism of Antonio Gramsci and Franco Rodano. The resulting analysis of Marxism helps understand the events that shaped postwar Italy.

Del Noce devoted a whole book to the Left wing of the Italian Catholic movement.[6] The book's primary target is Rodano, a close associate of Palmiro Togliatti and one of the leading communist "organic" intellectuals. In Rodano's view, Catholics must distinguish two aspects of Marxism: "Catholics obviously should condemn materialism and atheism, but should accept the Marxist interpretation of history" (118). He believed that parts of Marxism could yield a higher philosophical synthesis leading to a reconciliation with Catholicism. Thus he sought to replace outright opposition to Marxism (as outlined in papal encyclicals since *Rerum Novarum*) with a dialogue between the two traditions.

His opposition to Rodano's attempt to reconcile Marxism and Catholicism was related to his belief that were Catholics to open a dialogue with Marxists, the result would not be a higher synthesis but rather the assimilation of Catholicism into the Marxist framework. In Italy, the Communist Party could have hoped to gain political hegemony only by splitting the Catholic vote, which was precisely Togliatti's strategy. The Communist Party needed a group of Left Catholics to articulate such a strategy and attract other Catholics to the Party. Beginning in the 1940s, Rodano sought to do precisely that: he led a culturally active group of "Catholic communists" that had considerable influence on Togliatti and other communist leaders. He heeded Gramsci's exhortation to elaborate a "philosophy of praxis" — a new synthesis combining Catholicism, communism and democracy. As Del Noce saw it, Rodano was not seeking to reconcile Catholicism with modernity but simply go beyond Marxism-Leninism in order to realize the Marxist agenda (8). Historically, such an attempt to realize Marxism by going beyond it had already been made by Gentile.[7]

In a recent interview, Lucio Colletti has emphasized the close philosophical affinity between Gramsci and Gentile: "Del Noce understood before anybody else that Gentile is the model for Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci's definition of Marxism as a philosophy of praxis was not meant to avoid his jailer's censorship but was in spirit as well as literally taken from Gentile's *La Filosofia di Marx*."[8] Del Noce argued that both Gramsci and Gentile had assimilated the same Italian idealist tradition popularized at the beginning of the 20th century by, among others, Giuseppe Prezzolini's *La Voce*. This journal had a strong cultural impact both on fascism and anti-fascism. Intellectuals of the most diverse backgrounds wrote for *La Voce*: the liberal Piero Gobetti, the socialist Giovanni

6. Augusto Del Noce, *Il Cattolico Comunista* (Milan: Rusconi, 1981).
7. *Ibid.*, p. 417.
8. Riccardo Chiaberge, "Gentile: L'Ora di Fare i Conti," an interview with Lucio Colletti in *Corriere della Sera* (May 8, 1994).

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Amendola, the radical Gaetano Salvemini, the Catholic Giovanni Papini, a reactionary socialist Charles Peguy, etc. Prezzolini's main objective was to make idealism into a cultural force able to shape Italian history.

La Voce addressed issues such as Southern economic development, the right to work, universal suffrage, divorce, health care, etc. Intellectually, it harked back to the idealist tradition most prominently represented by Alfredo Oriani. A leftist follower of Mazzini, Oriani was a republican defending Risorgimento ideals and those of the Roman Republic. He claimed that the Risorgimento was a betrayed revolution and that the patriotic forces had been marginalized by the northern monarchic and liberal elites. Rejecting the idyllic description of the Risorgimento provided by the ruling elite, he argued that the unification of Italy had not been led by a cohesive political group and that between 1821 and 1866 there had been considerable opposition.[9] Marginalized by conservative forces, the Mazzini republican faction carried its discontent into post-unification Italy. It claimed that the revolution had not been completed. Since the ruling elite was conservative, it had not sought to assimilate the masses into the state. Thus the radical faction demanded the completion of the revolution and a reconciliation between nation and state.

Gentile continued this Right idealist Hegelian tradition by raising issues such as nationalism, while Gramsci took the Left syndicalist position by continuing the populist tradition rooted in the Left nationalism of Carlo Pisacane and Oriani.[10] Very early on Del Noce pointed out that Gramsci was not a typical Marxist subscribing to historical materialism.[11] Accordingly, he did not believe that the bourgeoisie would wither away. For this reason, in the best *La Voce* tradition, he sought to develop a new revolutionary outlook. In this, Gramsci was influenced by Gentile and his rejection of Marx' vision of history as class struggle. Gentile, however, embraced Marx' theory of praxis as an attempt to achieve a more just society through a revolutionary break with the established order.[12]

For Gentile, philosophy cannot be an abstract intellectual exercise; it must influence events by confronting contemporary social and political questions. If philosophy and politics are closely linked, then it is necessary to understand the intellectual forces inspiring political action. The main difference between Marx' and Gentile's voluntarism is that the latter believed human action is always the result of human will, whereas Marx thought material relations were decisive. Both emphasized concreteness. So did Gramsci. What distinguished

9. Alfredo Oriani, *La Lotta Politica in Italia* (Rocca di San Casciano: Universale Cappelli, 1969).

10. Gramsci defined Oriani as the most honest and least passionate representative of the Italian intellectuals of the older generation. See Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere* (Turin:Einaudi, 1975), Vol. I, p. 1040. On the relation between Gramsci's neo-idealist Marxism and the post-WWII Italian Communist Party, see Ernesto Galli Della Loggia, "La Rinascita di una Nazione," in *Corriere della Sera* (September 16, 1993).

11. Augusto Del Noce, *Il Suicidio della Rivoluzione* (Milan: Rusconi, 1978).

12. Giovanni Gentile, *La Filosofia di Marx* (Florence: Sansoni, 1974), p. 163.

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the latter "from the rest of his generation of Hegelian Marxists was his absolute historicism, the cornerstone of his philosophy of praxis, whereby ideas cannot be divorced from their concrete socio-historical context."[13]

When Gramsci sought to elaborate a philosophy of praxis based on Catholicism and idealism, he moved toward Gentile, away from the Marxism of his time. Specifically, he attempted to reform Marxism by confronting Croce's earlier objections: "For Croce's philosophical perspective it is necessary to undertake the same reduction that the first theoreticians of the philosophy of praxis undertook with respect to the Hegelian conception."[14] Gramsci considered Croce's philosophy the highest expression of Italian Idealism. In order to develop a more advanced philosophy than that of orthodox Marxism, thus it was necessary to begin with Croce. Not by chance, Croce is mentioned much more often than Gentile in the *Prison Notebooks*.

Croce was a central figure not only in Italian idealism but also in the famous "Bernstein Debate." He had been a student of Antonio Labriola, who himself had been influenced by Italian idealism (through Bertando Spaventa — Croce's uncle). In 1925 Croce wrote: "As soon as Marxist doctrines in Italy attracted the attention and passion of liberal and cultured men such as Antonio Labriola, the leading Italian Marxist, serious examination of Marxism began. At the same time, so did the disintegration of Marxism under the critical blows of those who had first approached it with faith and love. One after another, the theories fell — the theory of value and surplus value, the theory of the falling rate of profit, the theory of history as class struggle and the theory of historical materialism."[15]

Early in the 20th century many radical intellectuals sought to salvage the Marxist philosophical framework. According to Del Noce, "One peculiar feature of turn-of-the-century Italian Marxism was its attempt to revise Marx' philosophy so that it could stand the economists' critiques of *Capital*. This is true of Gentile, Mondolfo and Gramsci."[16] They all stressed that Marx' relevance resides in the moral character of his philosophy, in posing the problem of the proletariat's socio-economic well-being. Although the scientific pretensions of his philosophy had not withstood the test of time, its idealistic and moralistic side had to be salvaged. Croce, however, had precipitated Marxism into a serious crisis. Considering it only one philosophical tradition among others, he had not been interested in salvaging its philosophical framework, and he adamantly opposed the philosophy of praxis of his time. Instead, he sought a liberal-democratic alternative.

For Gramsci, "the cultural feature of Marxism is its German idealist core, which is also what is to be developed politically. In a manner diametrically opposed

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13. Paul Piccone, "Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* — The Remake," in *Telos* 90 (Winter 1991-92), p. 182.

14. Antonio Gramsci, *Quarderni del Carcere*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 1233.

15. Benedetto Croce, *Cultura e Vita Morale* (Bari: Laterza, 1955), p. 286.

16. Augusto Del Noce, *Giovanni Gentile: Per una Interpretazione Filosofica della Storia Contemporanea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), p. 81.

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to recent efforts by French and English Marxists to salvage the 'scientific' economic core of Marxism at the expense of its philosophical shell, Gramsci saw the philosophical element as the core to be saved and the scientific component as the historically obsolete and irrelevant shell."[17] While Croce dismissed the philosophy of praxis, Gramsci sought to radicalize it. According to Del Noce, Gramsci's philosophy generated a neo-idealist version of Marxism. "But when Gramsci thought he had reached the Marx' authentic philosophy of praxis through Croce, he had actually rediscovered a revolutionary version of Gentile's philosophy of praxis."[18] Del Noce, of course, condemned both fascism and communism because "Marx' and Gentile's philosophy aim at an absolute immanentism, understood as a liberation from transcendence and dependence."[19] Italian communism originated in the dissolution of Gentile's philosophical synthesis, which explains why Italian communism attempted to replace orthodox Marxism with a new idealist version (76). Gramsci is a typical expression of this effort, which Togliatti realized politically: according to communists, the resistence experience was the second Risorgimento. Whereas the first Risorgimento had only involved elites, the resistence had been a mass movement.

Del Noce attributes the failure of idealism to its spiritual deficits. Even though idealism does not reject Christianity, its immanent ethical values are based only on reason and history. But for Del Noce ethical values can only be justified theologically. Fascism had been possible because politicians had been able to combine ethics and politics. The only possible outcome was the "suicide of revolution," both on the Right and on the Left. "Thus one can go from religion to politics but not from politics to religion. Religion cannot be absorbed into politics — either from the Right or from the Left. A barrier of spiritual values must be erected to prevent politics from becoming predominant and to prevent human dignity from being overwhelmed by political, economic and social struggles."[20] Politics must not overwhelm society and mobilize it for political ends. According to Del Noce, if the modern state delegitimates all concrete orders between the individual and the state, if the drive toward centralization destroys communities, guilds, religious associations, voluntary services, etc., the individual's social and cultural character suffers.

For Del Noce, the question of atheism came up at the beginning of modern philosophy with Descartes,[21] who sought to overcome skepticism with the scientific method. But this project failed for two reasons. First, as Pascal pointed out, the scientific method cannot be applied to human consciousness. Second, a rationalism based on nature cannot deal with a transcendental dimension. With

17. Paul Piccone, *Italian Marxism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 119.
18. Del Noce, *Giovanni Gentile*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
20. Del Noce, *Il Cattolico Comunista*, *op. cit.*, p. 413.
21. Del Noce develops his critique of modernity essentially in two works: *Il Problema Dell'Ateismo: Il Concetto di Ateismo e la Storia della Filosofia come Problema* (Bologna:Il Mulino, 1964) and *L'Epoca della Secolarizzazione* (Milan: Rusconi, 1970).

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Rodano, Del Noce thought that nihilism would not be automatically overcome if Marxism failed: it would still thrive in a "consumer society." Capitalism can prevail over Marxism, because it can integrate the proletariat. But even if the masses' primary needs are satisfied, people remain part of a machine and lack personal identity. For this reason, he contraposed Catholicism to neo-capitalism. Focusing on technologism, Buttiglione rightly points out that for Del Noce: "The extention of technologism beyond its own sphere is promoted by the suicide of philosophy, which transforms technology into an ideology. By nature technology mediates between objective scientific knowledge and cultural goals. Thus technology needs culture and cannot replace it" (208). When technology replaces culture, it legitimates goals without giving them meaning. But culture imbues all goals, including survival, with ethical, aesthetic and truth values.[22] In Del Noce's view, the suicide of modern philosophy is responsible for the predominance of technology, which in turn leads to a new form of liberalism more deceitful than the older one. While the old liberalism was an elite ideology, unable to spread atheism among common folks, the new liberalism is a mass phenomenon promising a life without suffering and frustration. Material abundance, however, only conceals metaphysical poverty: "Until human beings become effectively autonomous subjects, they cannot avoid experiencing their limitation, their contingency and their metaphysical

22. Here Del Noce goes back to Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*: "Man has to subdue the earth and dominate it, because as the 'image of God' he is a person, that is to say, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself, and with a tendency to self-realization. As a person, man is therefore the subject of work. As a person he works, he performs various actions belonging to the work process; independently of their objective content, these actions must all serve to realize his humanity, to fulfill the calling to be a person that is by reason of his very humanity. . . . Such a concept practically does away with the very basis of the ancient differentiation of people into classes according to the kind of work done. This does not mean that, from the objective point of view, human work cannot and must not be rated and qualified in any way. It only means that the primary basis of the value of work is man himself, who is its subject. This leads immediately to a very important conclusion of an ethical nature: however true it may be that man is destined for work and called to it, in the first place work is 'for man' and not man 'for work.' Through this conclusion one rightly comes to recognize the preeminence of the subjective meaning of work over the objective one. Given this way of understanding things, and presupposing that different sorts of work that people do can have greater or lesser objective value, let us try nevertheless to show that each sort is judged above all by the measure of the dignity of the subject of work, that is to say the person, the individual who carries it out. On the other hand, independently of the work that every man does, and presupposing that this work constitutes a purpose — at times a very demanding one — of his activity, this purpose does not possess a definitive meaning in itself. In fact, in the final analysis it is always man who is the purpose of the work, whatever work it is that is done by man — even if the common scale of values rates it as the merest 'service,' as the most monotonous, even the most alienating work." John Paul II, *On Human Work* (Boston: St. Paul, 1981), pp. 15-17. See Del Noce, *Il Cattolico Comunista*, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

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poverty, which is far greater than material poverty. Whereas in the past large masses of people uncontaminated by liberalism contributed their religious, moral and altruistic values to society, today people are prevented from developing their own personality; they cannot perceive their metaphysical poverty, since material abundance keeps them happy in their state of alienation" (210).

Del Noce also saw a similar pattern in those East European societies where Marxism was the dominant ideology. Deprived of its revolutionary elan, Marxism gives way to economic liberalism and to a society in which the production and consumption of goods is the only value. Del Noce sees Marxism and liberalism as two different products of the same modernity. Liberalism wins out over Marxism because it can deliver the goods. In this context, Del Noce discusses the displacement of traditional rural and particularist cultures by secular culture. The situation he describes is similar to that of Latin America, where the mixing of political Catholicism and Marxism (liberation theology) has had unsettling results. Since rural and communitarian cultures in those countries are much weaker than in Europe, the demise of communism has created a critical situation in that Western secular values do not offer a viable alternative in terms of civic culture: they are unable to foster those civic virtues necessary for concrete communities.

Today Del Noce sees two major ideologies in conflict — a religious ideology advocating the predominance of spiritual over material values, and a new form of materialism proclaming the technical superiority of capitalism. Both support democracy. For the former, democracy is necessary for the development of a free will: "it is no coincidence that modern democracy is founded on religious freedom — the first right. If one has the right to think, he has also the right to live according to his own conscience. Thus democracy is recognized as a value, or rather as a necessary environment for the full realization of the value of a person. One premise of democracy is thus the recognition of man as a reality which transcends the natural order. If one rejects this idea, and the individual is absorbed in the species, this ethical foundation disappears and democracy becomes nothing more than a means of exercising power."[23] For materialism every individual in a democratic society can pursue his own interest. Yet only formal or legal rights are recognized, while culture is relegated to the private sphere: "For the theorists of 'consumer society,' democracy is the direct result of absolute relativism. Whoever believes that truth either does not exist or at least cannot be known can be a true democrat. He does not want to fight for any ideal but only for the realization of his own immediate interest which, always being limited, can be mediated by other interests." (215-216).

Buttiglione was Del Noce's student and, probably out of deference to his mentor, this biography is not as critical as it could have been. Buttiglione is concerned primarily with elaborating a new political culture for politically

23. *Ibid*, p. 411.

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active Catholics and sees Del Noce as the Founding Father. With the old members of the Christian Democratic Party still upholding an outdated concept of state, Buttiglione wants to develop a fresh outlook. Following Del Noce's critique of Catho-communism, he seeks to transcend the bloated welfare state by combining a free market economy and solidarity. The latter is to thrive primarily within voluntary and religious organizations rather than within the state. The rallying call is "less state, more society," predicated on the principle of subsidiarity: the state should not involve itself in matters which can be dealt with at the community level.[25] In order to thrive the economy needs a healthy community where laws are respected and a common culture is shared. Within such a context, it is easy to reach agreement on what constitutes the common good. In a society torn by severe political divisions or radical individualism, economic relations are marred and capitalism cannot thrive. With the fall of communism many Catholics see a new political scenario opening up possibilities for the development of a Catholic social doctrine concerned with a moral critique of the excesses of modern society. This requires radical changes in the Christian Democratic Party's policies. It is doubtful whether these changes can be implemented by a party which for more than 40 years has supported a State that penetrated all sectors of society.

In *Il Suicidio della Rivoluzione* Del Noce sought to discredit the Italian revision of Marxism. Gentile had combined revolutionary praxis with Risorgimento philosophy, which he saw as a restoration of Italian traditional values. He saw that "socialists were the strongest and most radical part of society"[26] and that this revolutionary force has to come to terms with the nation. For Gramsci a revision of Marxism in Italy had meant coming to terms with idealism and traditions. Therefore, in order to succeed, Marxism had to present itself as a reassuring revolution that would not uproot tradition. This is why the Italian Communist Party, especially after WWII, presented itself not as a class-based party, but as one representing the most advanced sections of society. By showing how Gramsci was indebted to Gentile, Del Noce sought to discredit the concept of revolution. In the East the revision of Marxism had resulted in a totalitarianism, while in the West (Italy) it had generated an authoritarian state. Del Noce was weary of those Catholics who had entered into a dialogue with Marxism and applauded popular resistance against such a dialogue both in Italy and in Poland. This Catholic rejection of any progressive philosophy had precipitated the dissolution of Marxism-Leninism. For Del Noce political voluntarism was central to both fascism and communism. The will to power common to both, however, had buried the notion of the common good. For Del Noce the only thing that could be saved from the dissolution of Italian idealism (including neo-Marxist idealism) was part of the Risorgimento philosophy — primarily

25. On the principle of subsidiarity see: Pope John XXIII, *Christianity and Social Progress* (Boston, St. Paul Press, 1961).

26. Giovanni Gentile, *La Filosofia di Marx* (Florence, Sansoni, 1974), p. 120.

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Antonio Rosmini, the theoretician of Italian federalism. For Rosmini, Catholicism was central to the Italian tradition and what distinguished it from idealism was the fact that it had not been imposed by the state but was a living experience in everyday life. What was needed was not a centralized state but one responsive to local needs. Regionalism in Italy had often flourished with strong local institutions, but did not necessarily lead to a decrease of a commitment to national unity. Italy benefitted from its geography, former Roman unity and Catholic experience, but was divided into regions with strong traditions of local autonomy characterized by different economies. For Rosmini these traditions of local autonomy were not a weakness, but a strength: a unity in diversity which the state should foster. A political culture seeking to reconstruct the common good, not from the will to power of the centralized state but from the communities' need to work together is central for the reconstitution of political institutions in Italy today.

Today Del Noce's analysis of modern society and his critique of modernity are finally being taken seriously by a post-Marxist Italian Left. "Italy today [the 1970s]," wrote Pier Paolo Pasolini, "is as destroyed as it was in 1945. This destruction is even more dramatic because we do not experience the pain of damaged houses and monuments but the more dramatic destruction of humanistic and, most importantly, popular values."[27] He went on to defend that "sacredness which consumerism has destroyed, thus making man brutish and stupid fetish-lovers."[28] In other word, even for a Left heretic such as Pasolini, what is needed to overcome alienation in a consumer society is a return to traditional values.

Paolo Morisi

27. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Lettere Luterane* (Turin, Einaudi, 1976), p. 83.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

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